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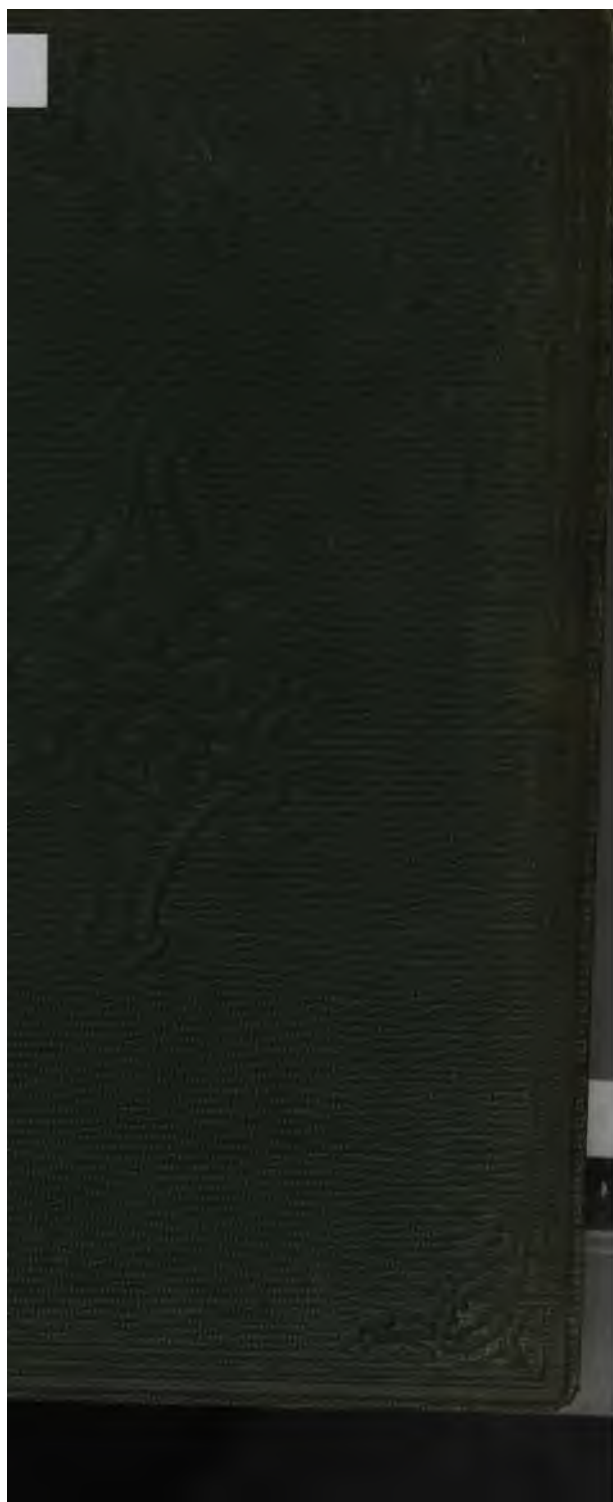
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Samuel Beaud  
14 February 1859-



# DOMESTIC SCENES IN RUSSIA:

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS .

DESCRIBING

A YEAR'S RESIDENCE IN THAT COUNTRY,

CHIEFLY IN THE INTERIOR.

*Edward*

BY THE

REV. R. LISTER VENABLES, M.A.

*SECOND EDITION, REVISED.*

LONDON:

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1856.

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TO  
THOSE TO WHOM  
THE ORIGINALS OF THESE LETTERS  
WERE ADDRESSED,  
*This Volume*  
IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED BY  
THEIR SON.



## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

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THE republication of the following series of Letters has been suggested by the interest in all questions connected with Russia to which the events of the present time have given rise.

The Letters were written many years ago, but in the interim little change can have taken place in the manners and customs they describe. The character of the people, the principles of the government, the institutions of the country, and the relative positions of the different classes in the community remain unaltered. The book, therefore, in its descriptions of Russian life, its sketches of Russian habits and ideas, and its general picture of the social condition of the people, will convey no incorrect impression of the existing state of things. The peculiar circumstances under which the author visited the country, his position of intimacy in private families, and his constant opportunities of unreserved intercourse with Russians of the highest character and intelligence, afforded him unusual advantages in acquiring authentic information. But when he proceeded to publish his Letters he found it a matter of some little difficulty and delicacy to speak of Russia with truth, and yet without committing any breach of confidence, and without making an ill requital for the unbounded kindness and hospitality for which he was indebted to his friends in that country.



The object of the book is not to discuss the strength or the weakness of Russia, but to relate such incidents as may entertain or interest the reader, and to delineate such national and social characteristics as fell under the author's observation.

At the present moment perhaps the relative positions of the landed noble and the serf may be deemed worthy of some attention. And with reference to this subject especial notice will naturally be directed to the oppressive system of the conscription—hateful to the nobles as a burthensome tax, and dreaded by the peasants as the worst of evils. Looking to the conscription and its effects, we must indeed give both those classes credit for the sternest principles of self-denying patriotism if we suppose war in the abstract to be popular with them. The peasant, it is true, has a fanatical veneration for his Emperor, and the fallacious cry of a Holy War against the Infidel may make some impression on his mind. Yet the Russian serf has far more of the submissive resignation of a fatalist than of the spirit of a hero or a martyr in his character; while his master, the noble, is undoubtedly no enthusiast—on the conservative side at least—in religion or in politics. Yet the Russian is by no means destitute of national pride, and it may reasonably be assumed that the contest with foreign enemies tends to stimulate the loyalty of the people and to check and deaden internal disaffection. The longer the contest lasted the more closely perhaps would the Government and the people of Russia be united, the more powerfully would the national spirit be roused, and the more cheerfully might the country submit to the necessary sacrifices entailed by the war. Yet we may judge how terribly severe those sacrifices must already be, not only from the reports which have occasionally reached us of late, but from the consideration that *men, money, and communications*

—the three first essentials of war—are three most prominent deficiencies in the wide but thinly inhabited regions of Russia.

Mr. Sabouroff's Letter on rural affairs, at the conclusion of this book, will furnish some interesting suggestions on this head. "Time and money," says he (in one word, *capital*), "are generally the very things of which landed proprietors in this country have least at their disposal." And again, "Owing to our total deficiency in the means of internal communication it sometimes happens that while in one part of the country there is a superabundance, another part is suffering from dearth."

It must not be forgotten that Tamboff, the province more especially alluded to by Mr. Sabouroff, is stated by him to be by comparison peculiarly fortunate in the possession of channels of communication. It is, moreover, the very province which was spoken of some years ago in our own parliament as the inexhaustible granary of Russia; and the justice of this character is to a considerable degree borne out by Mr. Sabouroff's descriptions of the great fertility and abundant produce of the district.

The natural inference from all we know of Russia leads us to conclude that the country must already be greatly impoverished, and its resources fearfully strained by the war. Russia therefore cannot but earnestly long for peace. At the same time we must presume that, while on the one hand little sympathy is probably felt with the ambitious designs of the late Emperor, and with the aggressive policy of which the Grand Duke Constantine is now regarded as the champion; yet, on the other hand, no indifference to the national honour of Russia is likely to stain any important class or body in the community.

At the present moment prospects of peace have somewhat

unexpectedly opened upon us. The great question will doubtless have been decided before these pages issue from the press. All will rejoice if the expectations now confidently entertained be realised, and if the result of the pending negotiations be peace—such a peace at least as shall secure the great ends for which we and our gallant allies have fought. All will rejoice if such terms of peace be ratified as shall prove Russia to be convinced that Europe will never permit the political abasement of the Crescent under the hypocritical pretext of exalting the Cross—that holy symbol, in sincere veneration for which we nevertheless at least equal Russia herself. All will rejoice if such a peace shall have been secured; and if secured, it will be, with God's blessing, because we have boldly fought for it. The Russian has much of the Asiatic in his character, and he chiefly respects those who know how to make themselves respected. We shall be all the better friends with him hereafter, because he has seen that, though reluctant to draw the sword, we have been prepared to wield it when drawn—being always, whatever our alleged errors of strategy, or our temporary defects of organization, eager to fight, and able to fight well:

*Nec cauponantes bellum, sed belligerantes.*

Nor is it only the terror of our naval power, or the indomitable courage of Alma, or the heroism of Inkerman, or the fearless charge of Balaclava, or the unflinching toil and sleepless guards in the trenches before Sebastopol, or the not less glorious, though less fortunate defence of Kars, which will have been duly appreciated by our foes. The firm determination of the English people at home, the cordial support which the nation has invariably given to every energetic measure for pressing on the war, the undaunted attitude of the country, will not have been thrown away. Neither will Russia have failed

to note the comparative ease with which the internal wealth and the unrestricted commerce of England have enabled her to meet the lavish expenditure of the war; not exhausting but displaying her vast resources. Lastly, Russia will have learned that England and France united in a common cause can fight for it side by side with all their ancient spirit; and that their enemies have nothing to hope from divided counsels or revived animosities.

If these lessons have been already taught, as we trust they have, then the time is ripe for peace, and then the waste, and havoc, and bloodshed of another campaign may well be spared.

If not—grievous as are the calamities of war—the responsibility of its continuance, as of its commencement, will rest on other heads than ours. We are embarked in a just quarrel, and we cannot but fight it out to the end, if we have not done so already, now when we are in every way prepared. We cannot end our great contest by an inconclusive result. We cannot assent to peace—much as we love it—on terms which would leave the risk of our being forced at no distant period to re-engage in hostilities—perhaps at a disadvantage.

“Peace is no peace if it lets the ill grow stronger,  
Merely cheating destiny a very little longer;  
War, with its agonies, its horrors, and its crimes,  
Is cheaper if discounted and taken up betimes.

God defend the right, and those that dare to claim it!  
God cleanse the earth from the many ills that shame it!  
Give peace in our time, but not the peace of trembling,  
Won by true strength, not cowardly dissembling.”

F. LUSHINGTON. *Points of War.*

R. L. V.

January 30th, 1856.



## PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

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I CANNOT venture to add another to the numerous books on Russia which have already appeared, without pleading as my apology that I visited that country under circumstances affording opportunities, not usually within a stranger's reach, of observing the habits and character of the people. I am therefore induced to publish the following Letters, under an impression that some account of domestic life in the Interior may be, to a certain degree, interesting from its novelty.

Being nearly connected by marriage with several Russian families, I accompanied my wife into that country in the summer of 1837, for the purpose of visiting her relatives, among whom we spent twelve months, either in private houses in the Interior, or in habits of constant intercourse at St. Petersburg.

In the Letters now offered to the public I have given a simple detail of our sojourn in Russia, interspersed by a few general remarks and observations.

The court, the capital, the army, and the public institutions of the country, together with its political position and views, have occupied the pens of far abler travellers. My object has been to give some description of private life, national customs, and domestic habits in Russia.

*January, 1839.*



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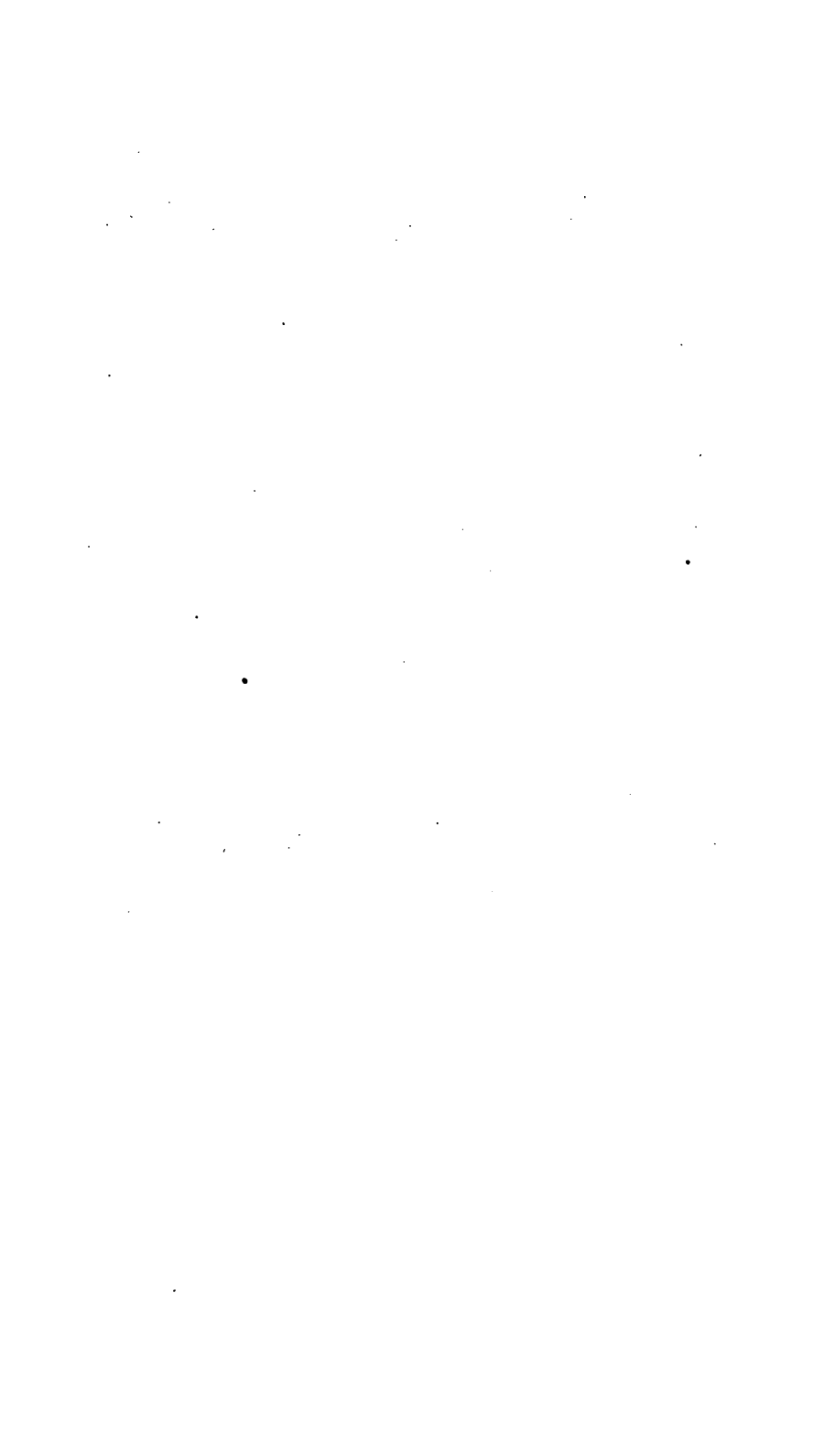
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# DOMESTIC SCENES IN RUSSIA.

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## LETTER I.

Account of voyage — Custom-house — Arrival at Petersburg — Passport regulations.

St. Petersburg, June 22nd, 1837.

I LOSE no time in sending you, according to promise, an account of our safe arrival here, after a pleasant and prosperous voyage of a week. We sailed from London on Wednesday morning the 14th, and we landed on the English Quay at Petersburg on Wednesday the 21st. We crossed the North Sea to Hamburg in the Countess of Lonsdale, a voyage not very fertile of incidents. Most of the time we were enveloped in a fog which would have done credit to London itself in November, and which only left us, to our great joy, when we were preparing off Heligoland to anchor for the night, as the captain would not venture to enter the Elbe without seeing his way. The banks of the Elbe present no objects of interest until seven or eight miles below Hamburg, when the ground on the right or Danish side of the river rises into bold slopes beautifully clothed with gardens and studded with villas, while the air was fragrant from the profusion of lilacs, now in that northern region in full luxuriance.

Having spent a few hours in the picturesque old city of Hamburg, which I hope we shall have more leisure to visit on our homeward journey, we hired a carriage, the ordinary *lohnkutsche* of Germany, the sight of which would collect a crowd in England, and at half past five on Friday afternoon we started for Lubeck, a distance of thirty-five miles. We travelled till after midnight, when we reached, not Lubeck, but a place called Schonberg, a sort of half-way house, only

twenty miles from Hamburg. Having no time to spare, we were in motion again at five in the morning, and we reached Lubeck at ten.

This road, connecting two important cities, is probably the worst great highway in Europe. In one place we saw a waggon, and that not a very heavy one, sticking fast, in spite of the efforts of ten horses; and, as you will infer from the time we spent over thirty-five miles, we performed most of the journey at a foot's pace. From Lubeck to Traavemunde, the port of the Baltic packets, is a stage of ten or twelve miles, with a good road, the luxury of which we fully appreciated. We arrived there just in time to embark on board the *Naslednik* steamer, in which we sailed at three o'clock in the afternoon. We soon found that out of some twenty passengers we were the only English on board, with the exception of a king's messenger. Of the remainder, among natives of France, Germany, Holland, Sweden, and Persia, the Russians mustered in strongest force; and sailing in their society in a Russian boat on the Baltic Sea, we almost felt that we had already reached the empire of the Czar. Some of our fellow voyagers spoke English, and all spoke French. The weather was all we could wish, and the arrangements and fare on board the packet were good. The Russian ladies soon discovered that M— was by birth a countrywoman of their own, and one of them\* proved to be well acquainted with her father and other members of her family. Under these circumstances our time passed rapidly and agreeably on board the *Naslednik*.

We sailed, as I have said, on Saturday afternoon, and by nine o'clock on Monday night we were in the Gulf of Finland. The following morning we were off Revel, and the captain said we should be at Cronstadt before midnight. We scarcely lost sight of land during the whole of Tuesday, and both shores of the Gulf of Finland were often visible at the same time. Indeed, during the entire voyage we were seldom many hours without seeing land, and the successive islands

\* With this lady, Princess Ourousoff, and her son, a most agreeable and well-informed young man, who was also on board, we had the pleasure of renewing our acquaintance during our short stay in Moscow in the following March.

which marked our progress were never-failing objects of interest. The number of ships, moreover, of which we could not unfrequently count one or two and twenty at a time around us, far and near, with their white sails set, helped to break the monotony of the passage ; while on one occasion we passed within five miles of a Russian squadron, consisting of ten or eleven men-of-war.

Our eyes, therefore, when we were tired of reading, were never at a loss for occupation by day ; and in this latitude at midsummer one can hardly say that night comes at all. The sun, indeed, goes below the horizon for a couple of hours, but the sky does not lose its colouring, and the smallest print or the palest handwriting may be read with ease in the open air at midnight.

On Tuesday night the approaching termination of our voyage drove away all idea of sleep, and no one thought of going below or of undressing. Indeed, at twelve o'clock by our London time, the *Naslednik* dropped her anchor under the batteries of Cronstadt, and in a few minutes afterwards the firing of the morning gun from the fortress, and the hoisting of the colours on the flagstaff, reminded us of our progress to the east ; it being already, by Petersburg time, two o'clock in the morning. On coming to anchor, we were immediately boarded by two or three boats full of custom-house officers and soldiers, who appeared to take possession of the ship. The passengers' luggage was brought upon deck, and ticketed with the word *unexamined*, a number being added to each article ; and in this manner no less than three weary hours were consumed. The deck was encumbered with luggage, and at every turn one met a soldier in a dingy grey great-coat, while the cabin was full of custom-house officers examining the passports, so that it was difficult to find a seat or a corner of a table at liberty.

At length the custom-house officers departed, and allowed us to proceed up the Gulf, towards Petersburg, under the care of the soldiers, who were left on board. Our delays were, however, not yet over, for in crossing the bar of the Neva our boat ran aground, though she only drew about seven feet of water, and this accident detained us three hours. At last,



by means of two anchors carried out a-head, we were warped once more into deep water, and soon afterwards we reached Petersburg, and came to our moorings at the English Quay about twelve o'clock. Several custom-house officers now came on board, and the passengers were allowed to step on shore on receiving their passports, which had been collected soon after we sailed from Traavemunde by the captain's book-keeper. We were allowed to take our cloaks and great-coats on shore with us, but nothing else. Thanks to a friend to whom we had written beforehand, we found a laquais-de-place awaiting our landing, with the agreeable information that lodgings were engaged for us. It was necessary, as the first thing, to superintend the examination of our luggage by the custom-house officers, which agreeable ceremony was performed in a large room hard by, set apart for the accommodation of steamboat passengers. The examination, though strict, could hardly be called vexatious, except that a new silk gown of M—'s was very near being confiscated, all articles of dress unmade, or which have not been worn, being contraband. A little representation, however, to a superior officer who spoke French, conquered this difficulty. All our books were set aside to be examined by the censor, even a map in a case being subjected to this scrutiny. They were made up into a parcel and sealed with lead, and were then delivered to me upon my signing a paper, in which I undertook to send them to the censor. The penalty for breaking or losing the lead seal is a hundred roubles (about four guineas). I was afterwards required to sign one or two other papers, and at last I received a permit for my luggage to pass. The introduction of poisonous drugs into the country is strictly prohibited, and a small medicine chest which we had was still detained for further examination, but it was afterwards very civilly given up to me unopened. We were now conducted to our lodgings, and after our sleepless night and wearisome morning we were exceedingly glad to find ourselves by two o'clock in a place where we could sit down and rest at our ease.

I have this morning been to write down my name at the Alien Office, the only personal trouble given to a foreigner

on his arrival by the police regulations. Our passport has been given to our landlord, whose duty it is to forward it to the proper authorities, by whom it is detained; a ticket of residence, as it is called, or a permission to remain in the country, which must be renewed on the 1st of January every year, being sent in its place. Our books have been already returned from the censor's office, with a certificate that they have been examined, and are permitted; so that all the troubles of a first arrival are over, and we may consider ourselves as fairly established in Petersburg. We do not mean, however, to remain here more than a few days, as the town is very empty, and we wish to lose as little as possible of the short Russian summer before we proceed into the interior, reserving the sights of Petersburg to be visited as we pass through on our way home.

On attending at the Alien Office I encountered some of our French and German fellow-passengers. As they one after another completed the necessary forms and signed their names, I perceived that a demand of five roubles was made from each, and therefore when my turn came I laid down five roubles, like the rest, before the clerk. Somewhat to my surprise he waved his hand, and intimated that I had nothing to pay. I looked to my attendant for an explanation, and he said, "Oh, they are merchants, and you are noble." "How, noble?" was my reply. "Why," said he, "you are in the English service; you are a clergyman."

On quitting the custom-house, after the examination of our luggage, we noticed the first characteristic specimen we had seen of a Russian equipage, in the shape of an open carriage drawn by four horses abreast. It was proceeding slowly along, and a lady was walking on the foot-pavement by its side. Rather to my surprise, the lady accosted M— and embraced her, proving, when the unexpected salutation was explained, to be an aunt, who had very kindly driven in from her villa near Petersburg to greet us on our arrival. This agreeable little incident was no unfavourable omen of our reception by M—'s family; and it has been followed up by a similar occurrence in our walk this morning, so that I have already begun to make acquaintance with our Russian relatives.

## LETTER II.

Intended mode of travelling — Russian dinner — Practice of bathing horses — Kazan church — Pavements in Petersburg — English church — Difference of calendar in Russia — Comparison between London and Petersburg — Equipages — Droschkas — Summer garden — The islands — The Hermitage — The Winter Palace — Military uniforms — Public buildings.

St. Petersburg, June 28th, 1837.

WE are on the point of leaving Petersburg, and we only await a conveyance to take us southwards, which, strange to say, in this great capital, is at this moment difficult to meet with. The plan which we mean to pursue, and which is the most comfortable of any that could be devised for strangers, is to hire a small diligence, which will be at our disposal for the journey. It will contain four people, besides the driver and conductor, who will manage everything: upon the road, we paying a fixed sum for the journey before we start. We have engaged a man and a maid, the former of whom speaks English, and both speak German and Russian more or less. Most people are now in the country, but we have dined twice with M—'s relatives since we have been here; once in town, and once at a villa in the immediate neighbourhood. The dinners were served in the style usual on the Continent; nothing but the dessert being put on the table, and the dishes being brought in and handed round successively. The chief peculiarity to be remarked here was the custom of handing round liqueurs, with cheese, caviare, &c., before we went into the dining-room. We had also some national dishes, such as mushrooms of various kinds and of all colours, which, if they are to be found, no one would venture to eat in England. The principal novelty was an iced soup called *Batvinia*, of which the Russians appeared very fond, and without which they declared that a dinner in hot weather could not be called complete. Like most foreigners, however, I found it exceedingly bad, and, indeed, perfectly uneatable. It is made

with quass (a Russian substitute for beer), chopped cucumbers, onions, &c. ; and a large slice of salt sturgeon is eaten with it.

The Neva ran close before the windows of the villa where we dined, and in the evening we saw several horses brought down to have a swim in the river. The horses all seemed used to bathing, and I find that it is a general custom to give them a swim almost every evening during the summer. There are numerous small rafts to be seen at the edge of the river and of the canals for the washerwomen, who stand on them with bare legs and wash the linen in the water at the side, or at a hole about four feet square, which is cut in the middle of the raft.

As we returned home we stopped to see the Kazan Church, which is the Cathedral of Petersburg. Another church, however, the St. Isaac's, which is now in progress, will, when finished, be far finer. The chief beauty of the Kazan Church consists in a handsome semicircular colonnade facing the street, and leading from either side to the principal entrance, and in the beautiful pillars of polished granite which support the roof. The dome is much too small for the size of the edifice, and the interior of the church is somewhat narrow. The rails of the altar, which are handsome and massive, are of solid silver.

At the lower end of the church are a number of flags taken from the Persians, the French, and other nations ; and against one of the pillars are suspended the keys of various captured fortresses, with brass plates, giving the name of each. Marshal Davoust's baton is also hung up in a conspicuous spot, in a glass cylinder, to protect it from injury.

Throughout Petersburg are excellent flagged pavements for foot passengers ; but the ordinary pavement of the streets is execrable, the stones which compose it being of every possible shape and size. To fill up the crevices and give an apparent smoothness, a gritty sand is strewed in large quantities over the streets ; and as they never are watered, in spite of the facilities offered by the adjacent Neva and the various canals, the clouds of dust, or rather of fine gravel, with which the air is filled on a windy day, render it impossible to keep open one's eyes or to walk about in comfort. In most of the prin-

cipal streets, however, a wooden pavement has been introduced, which, when new and good, is extremely pleasant to drive over. It is free from dust, and the motion of the carriage over it is smooth and easy; but it is very expensive and by no means durable, not continuing more than two or three years in repair. It is moreover dangerous for horses in wet weather.\*

On Sunday we attended Divine service in the English church, which is very handsomely fitted up and liberally maintained by the British Factory.† The present chaplain is Mr. Law.‡ Here we were strongly reminded of our distance from home by the change in the calendar, since, as you are aware, the old style is still in use in Russia. Whereas, therefore, according to our reckoning, it was the *twenty-fifth* of July, we heard the *thirteenth* morning of the month announced from the reading-desk, and instead of having reached, as was the case in England, the fifth Sunday after Trinity, we found ourselves here thrust back to Trinity Sunday.

There can hardly be a greater difference between two capitals, each splendid of its kind, than between London and St. Petersburg, and the contrast is especially striking when one is transported by sea, as we have been, in the short space of a week, from the banks of the Thames to those of the Neva. Everything here looks fresh and new; and the light-coloured stucco of the houses, the air free from smoke, and the bright, clear stream of the river, about as broad as the Thames, all contribute to give this city an outward character widely different from that of our own metropolis. In the population of the streets the distinction is not less broadly marked. The uncouth peasant in his sheepskin coat, the tradesman in his

\* The wooden pavement, now generally abandoned for the reasons given above, had not yet been introduced into England in 1837.

† In addition to their church establishment, the Factory have an excellent library, and I am most happy in this opportunity of expressing my thanks and acknowledgments to the gentlemen to whom it belongs for the liberal manner in which English visitors at Petersburg are allowed the use of their books.

‡ The name of Mr. (now Dr.) Law is so well known in the present day, that it is almost superfluous to add that he still, in 1856, continues to hold, for the benefit of his countrymen, the honourable but arduous post of British chaplain at St. Petersburg.

long blue caftan buttoned on the left side, with black boots over his trowsers, and both with thick beards which have never felt a razor, are national figures which present themselves here at every step. The equipages also at Petersburg are, for the most part, quite unlike all that one has seen elsewhere. The private carriages, usually drawn by four long-tailed horses, the wheelers being driven by a bearded coachman, and the leaders, with enormously long traces fastened to the pole, being managed by a boy mounted on the off horse. Coachman and postilion are each dressed in a caftan or wrapper without a collar, fastened by a gay sash round the waist, and they wear a low-crowned hat of a peculiar shape; the coachman being adorned, if possible, by a handsome beard. The whole is frequently turned out in a wretched style; but the four horses keep up the dignity of the equipage. Many handsome carriages are indeed built at Petersburg, and many fine horses are to be met with; but it is to be remembered that at this season the court is out of town, and that most fashionable people have followed its example.

There are plenty of vehicles, both open and close, plying for hire in the streets; but as the fares are not regulated by authority, it is necessary always to make a bargain before engaging one. The *hack-cab* of Petersburg is the droschka, a very primitive vehicle, consisting merely of a bench about five feet long, covered by a cushion, mounted on four low wheels, and hung on C springs. The driver sits astride in front, resting his feet on an iron bar which projects on each side, over the fore axletree, and the passenger sits in a similar way behind, with a low back to lean against, and with his feet on the steps on either side, protected from the mud only by splashing boards over the wheels. If there is a second passenger, he sits sideways in the middle of the droschka. It is but an uncomfortable conveyance, since the passenger is entirely exposed to the weather, and the position of sitting astride on a bench is not agreeable. There are, however, plenty of private droschkas to be seen, very neat and convenient little carriages for fine weather. They are, indeed, much like a pony phaeton, with a seat in front for the driver, and they are very easy, being hung upon C springs. Sometimes these

vehicles are drawn by a pair of horses with a pole; but in general, like the hack-droschkas, they have shafts and are drawn by one horse, with his head borne up very high, a wooden arch resting on the ends of the shafts, and standing up over his head, with a ring at the highest part, to which the bearing-rein is attached. No carriage, waggon, or other vehicle with shafts is seen in Russia without this arch, which is called a *douga*. An outrigger is frequently harnessed on the near side of the shaft-horse, without a bearing-rein, but with his head, on the contrary, drawn down almost to the ground, and turned outwards, as if he were flying away from the shafts. In this form he is made to canter and prance through the streets, while his companion trots steadily along. To droschkas occasionally, and to heavier carriages often, a third horse is harnessed in like manner on the opposite side. This team of three horses, which is exceedingly handsome, is called a *tröika*. The Russians always drive with snaffle bits and without blinkers; \* bearing-reins being never used except for horses in shafts.

The canals which run through Petersburg, as well as the sides of the Neva, are crowded with large clumsy barges, loaded with wood for winter consumption, and cut up into logs ready for use. Good-sized hay-stacks, thatched over, may also be seen apparently floating by themselves upon the river; a second glance, however, showing that the foundation is a low barge, almost entirely covered and concealed by the mass with which it is loaded.

We have visited the Summer Garden, the principal public promenade of Petersburg. The garden has little beauty to boast of, but it is thickly planted with trees, and it, at least, offers abundance of shade. The walks are laid out in straight lines, and are adorned by marble busts and statues; but the prin-

\* From subsequent observation, it appears to me that the vice of kicking in harness is much less common with Russian horses than with English, though, from the manner in which the former are often harnessed, and the slight pains which are bestowed on breaking them in, the contrary might have been expected. The reason I take to be, that the Russian horse has the use of his eyes, while the English horse imagines an invisible enemy in every loose straw or other harmless object which touches him unexpectedly. No people habitually drive so fast as Russians.

cial ornament is the celebrated palisade facing the river, which is exceedingly fine. The Russians have a myth of an Englishman who came to Petersburg on purpose to see this palisade, and who rowed up the river to it, gazed at it, and, having gratified his curiosity, returned home without having set foot on Russian soil. Though not quite worthy of so long a pilgrimage as this gentleman is supposed to have taken, it is a most beautiful work.

We drove, one lovely evening, through the islands formed by the different branches of the Neva, and crowded with pretty villas and gardens, which in this hot weather look exceedingly cool and tempting, but which are uninhabitable from damp, excepting in the height of summer. They, however, form at present a very gay and attractive scene as one drives among them, along a well-watered road, a luxury which, as I have already observed, the city itself does not furnish.

One evening, about seven o'clock, we went out to walk, crossing the Isaac Bridge, and following the bank of the Neva on the other side up to the Exchange, and the scene, as we walked slowly along, was exquisitely beautiful. We were on the shady side of the river, while the light fell directly on the opposite side,—on the Admiralty, the Imperial Palace, and the other fine buildings which line the bank, as well as on the gay pleasure-boats which crowded the broad bright stream; while facing us stood the well-known and splendid equestrian statue of Peter the Great on a granite rock as its pedestal. We could not help regretting that the ugly bridge of boats was not replaced by a structure worthy of the Neva and of the city which lay before us; for the beauty of the river, enhanced as it is by the fine granite quays facing it on either side, leaves nothing but a handsome bridge to be desired. The construction of one has hitherto been prevented by the extreme depth of water, which renders it impossible to build piers. A chain-bridge is talked of, but here also there are, it is said, some serious difficulties to overcome. We returned home by the garden adjoining the custom-house; it is, however, remarkable for nothing but the immense numbers of birds of all sorts, from a parrot to a linnet, which are exposed here in cages for sale.

*We are much struck, in walking about Petersburg, with*



the small appearance there is of communication between the city and the country. Instead of the countless coaches, omnibuses, and travelling carriages of London, a solitary diligence, or a rare carriage with the appendage of trunks and imperials, is all that meets the eye.

We went yesterday to see the Hermitage, a friend having procured a ticket of admission for us. This palace is used as a picture gallery. Room after room is entirely covered with paintings, to examine which properly would require frequent visits for weeks together. The collection is fine, but there are no catalogues, at least none are placed in the hands of visitors, so that a stranger wanders on without knowing where to find the pictures most worthy of attention, a very serious drawback to his pleasure in so extensive a gallery. Besides the paintings, we saw some splendid vases of malachite, together with other works of art, as well as antiquities and curiosities.

From the Hermitage we passed into the Winter Palace,\* which adjoins and communicates with it, and which is the town residence of the Imperial family. The Hall of St. George, in which the Emperor holds his courts, is a magnificent room, both in its proportions and its decorations. The White Hall, in which the court balls are given, is extremely beautiful, and when it is lighted up the effect must be most brilliant. Adjoining this hall is a smaller room, hung with crimson velvet, studded with the Imperial eagle, embossed in gold: this is used for the reception of foreign ambassadors. A gallery, which opens into the Hall of St. George, is filled with portraits of all the Russian generals who served, with that rank, during the French war: they were all painted by an Englishman named Dawes. The execution is tolerable, and they are said to be in general good likenesses: Dawes received a thousand roubles, about forty pounds, for each. In another room are the portraits of Field-Marshal only—a rank of which the Emperor is extremely chary. He has at present but two, of whom one only is actually in his service, viz. Count Paskievitch, Prince

\* The Winter Palace was burnt, and everything but the bare walls was completely destroyed, a few months afterwards, viz. on the 29th of December, 1837.

of Warsaw; the other Russian Field-Marshal being the Duke of Wellington. Nothing can be more beautiful than are the private apartments in the Winter Palace: the decorations, which are chiefly in white and gold, are not only extremely rich, but in admirable taste. Gilding of every kind, and the imitation of marble, especially white marble, are arts carried to a high degree of perfection in Russia; and the splendid plate-glass windows complete the beauty of the rooms. The last room which we were shown amused us much, being the play-room in winter of the young Grand Duke Constantine, who is now eleven or twelve years of age. It is full of ingenious and pretty inventions for the amusement of the young prince. There are diminutive carriages and droschkas, sledges upon concealed castors, so as to run on the floor; a boat with a mechanical contrivance, so that a boy may row himself about the room in it; and a ship fully rigged, with a mast large enough to climb. There is also a slide of polished wood, in imitation of an ice-hill, and in one corner stands a little guard-house for playing at soldiers.\* In short, this room, with all its contents, is a perfect little-boy's paradise, and a very amusing sight to grown-up people.

To an English eye, nothing perhaps at Petersburg is more striking than the number of military in the streets. The usual force quartered in and about the city amounts, I believe, to sixty thousand men; but at this time the greater part of them are absent, being encamped twenty or thirty miles off for training and manœuvres; yet even now cocked hats, plumes, and uniforms encounter us at every step. We were at first somewhat surprised, in this hot weather, to see the soldiers always buttoned up in their great-coats,† and the officers wrapped in their cloaks. The former, however, thereby save their jackets, which they leave at home, and the latter are obliged to wear a cloak in the streets as a protection to the uniform, which would otherwise be very soon spoiled in this

\* Eighteen years later—in 1855—we have had experience that “the boy was father of the man,” and that the tastes of the Grand Duke have been developed with his growth, but not changed.

† The grey great-coat, which rendered it so difficult for the English troops, fighting in their great-coats, at Inkerman, to distinguish friend from foe.

most dusty city. Though, however, economy or cleanliness may be one cause for this habit, the Russians are undoubtedly a very chilly race, and they delight in wrapping themselves up. Indeed they say that to do so is a necessary precaution, owing to the sudden changes from heat to cold which are experienced in this climate. Ladies walk about, even in this weather, enveloped in shawls and cloaks; and the peasants are always seen in their *shoobs*,\* or coats of sheepskin, with the wool inside.

No soldier or officer, so long as he continues in the Emperor's service, even when he is on leave of absence or with his own family in the country, is allowed to appear on any occasion out of uniform.† The officers, when they retire from the service, if they have been well conducted, generally receive permission to wear the uniform of their regiment when they please, but without epaulettes. The persons employed in the civil service of the empire, in the public offices, the universities and institutions of every kind, including lawyers, doctors, and professors, have also uniforms, which, however, they are only obliged to wear when on duty. The undress is merely a plain coat of blue or green, with gilt buttons bearing a device. The full dress is worn with a sword, and much resembles a military uniform without epaulettes; it is completed by white breeches, shoes, and buckles, and a cocked hat. I must observe that a Russian has no idea of a member of any profession, however independent it may be according to our notions, being otherwise than "*in the service*."

I should suppose that in no other city of its size are there so many public buildings as in St. Petersburg. One-half of the town is crown property, and consists of Public Offices, Institutions, Palaces (of which the handsomest externally is the one lately built for the Grand Duke Michael), and Barracks, of which there are a vast number—sailors as well as soldiers being quartered in them.

*Wednesday Evening.*—The Nicolai steamer is just come in from

\* Any kind of cloak or coat lined with fur is called a *shoob*.

† When an officer in this service goes abroad, he cannot lay aside the uniform till he has passed the frontier. If he goes by sea, he must retain it till he reaches the foreign port where he is to land, and he must resume it there on coming home.

Lubeck with the English post. She brings us the expected news of the death of King William the Fourth, on Tuesday last, and of the proclamation of her present majesty Queen Victoria in less than a month after reaching her majority.

The moment of our departure is still uncertain: we hope to leave Petersburg to-morrow, but no Diligence is yet to be had, and it seems very doubtful when one will be at our disposal.\*

\* This difficulty of meeting with a conveyance from Petersburg to Moscow had been removed some time before the commencement of the present war by the opening of the railroad. Mr. Oliphant, in his '*Russian Shores of the Black Sea*,' gives a very amusing and graphic picture of the journey by railway in 1852.

## LETTER III.

Journey to Krasnoe — Diligence — Road — Bridges — Inns — Istvostchiks — Peasants' dress — Dreary landscape — Novogorod — Russian village — Military colonies — Torjok — Arrival at Krasnoe — Description of the place — Russian farming — Peasants' houses — Hospital and bath.

Krasnoe, July 12th, 1837.

You will be glad to see by the date of this letter that we have reached the place of our destination for the present, and that we are fairly established as visitors in a Russian country house. We are now in the province or government of Tver, and about four hundred miles south of Petersburg. In my last letter I told you we were anxious to start on our journey, but that no Diligence was to be had, and we were detained for two days longer, making frequent but fruitless inquiries at all the offices. On the evening of the 30th, however, as I was returning home after an unsuccessful search, I fortunately spied the object of which I was in quest, namely, a Diligence for four persons, passing slowly along through the street. My servant, who was with me as interpreter, ascertained that it had just arrived from Moscow, and, having set down its passengers, was proceeding to the office. To this place I lost no time in making my way, and at once engaged the Diligence, which I was told would be ready to start, if I chose, in two hours: I, however, preferred setting out in the morning.

Though we were only going as far as Torjok, which is but five hundred versts, we were obliged to pay for the Diligence all the way to Moscow, two hundred versts further. The price was three hundred and eighty roubles, somewhat more than sixteen pounds. A Russian verst is about three-quarters of a mile: and the rouble, if in coin, is worth about ten pence; if assignat, *i. e.* in paper, about ten pence halfpenny. In all payments the former is understood, unless the contrary be explicitly stated, and the rouble may in general be considered

as equivalent to a French franc.\* The expense of engaging a diligence between Petersburg and Moscow is considerably more than that of posting, and the additional cost was still greater for us, since we were only conveyed about two-thirds of the distance, while we had to pay for the whole. For strangers, however, who arrive in Russia without any carriage of their own, it is very convenient to travel in this manner.

The vehicle having been brought over-night into the yard of our lodgings, for the convenience of packing the luggage, by nine o'clock in the morning of the 1st everything was ready. The conductor, who spoke a little French, arrived; four horses abreast were put to, and we started on our journey, having delivered to the conductor our passports, authorising us to leave St. Petersburg. After passing the barrier, where a handsome triumphal arch is in progress of erection, and will soon be finished, we found ourselves on an excellent macadamized road, which is completed all the way to Moscow. The bridges are handsome and solid, being built of granite, with a cast-iron balustrade of an open pattern, exhibiting the Imperial eagle, with helmets, swords, fasces, &c. The new bridges are not yet all finished, but the deficiency is in every case supplied by a safe, temporary wooden bridge.

At distances of from fifty to a hundred versts apart along this road, are handsome inns belonging to the crown, some of the apartments in them being reserved for the Imperial family, and only used for ordinary travellers in case of necessity. The innkeeper occupies the house on conditions which forbid his charging anything for the use of the rooms, which are kept always heated in winter: the traveller paying merely for what he orders, and the price of everything, from a cup of tea to a dinner, being fixed by a printed tariff in Russian, French, and German, which is hung up in every room. These inns are a comfort and accommodation, for which travellers are indebted to the liberality of the late Emperor Alexander, who built them to replace the palaces which were formerly kept up along this road, at a great expense, for the use of the Imperial family,

\* A few years after these letters were written, the silver rouble, worth about three shillings, was adopted, and still continues to be used as the standard of Russian currency, instead of the assignat rouble.

without affording any advantage to the public at large. We travelled from eight to ten miles an hour, and reached Torjok on the morning of the 3rd instant, after a journey of forty-nine hours. The post-horses are in general miserable-looking little animals, but they are much better than they appear, and can go both far and fast. No sort of care is taken of them, and the manner of treating them would soon destroy less hardy nags.

The Russian postilions, *istvostchiks*, or rather *yemstchiks*, as they are called, always drive from the box. A great deal of time is lost in changing horses, an operation which we seldom performed in less than half an hour. There is always a great deal of bargaining and disputing as to who is to go, among the peasants who keep the post-horses, and the question seems generally to be decided by lot. We frequently were driven by a lad of fifteen; but they all seemed perfectly skilful in driving four-in-hand, though in a very different fashion from the team of an English coach. Our *istvostchiks* were, generally speaking, a gay, good-humoured set of people; but one stage we had a very sulky fellow, who did not drive at all to the satisfaction of the conductor, who rated him, till at last the man, in rage, stopped, jumped down, and was proceeding to take off his horses, and leave us in the road. The conductor, however, was soon at his back, threatening him with the police, and abusing him most violently; hitting him all the time tolerably hard over the head with a thick leather pipe, till the *istvostchik*, whom I at first expected to return his blows, at length remounted the box and proceeded.

The dress of the *istvostchiks* is that of the Russian peasant in general. They wear a shirt, usually red, made without a collar, and hanging outside a pair of loose trousers, or drawers, of blue linen or calico, which are tucked into a pair of boots reaching half way up the leg. The shirt is girded round the waist by a leather belt. Over this dress the Russian seldom thinks it too hot to wear his coat of sheepskin, with the wool inside; this, however, he throws off when he enters a house. The hat is low crowned, with a large buckle to the band, and the crown projecting all round. Many of the *istvostchiks* adorn their hats with a peacock's

feather twisted round them. The use of a razor is unknown among the peasants, and the rough, untrimmed beards, in the colour of which red is apt to preponderate, give the people a wild, uncivilized appearance. The men wear the hair divided on the top of the head, and cut all round the neck like the edge of a bowl. They generally, when working, wear a band round the head to prevent the hair from falling into their eyes. The women as well as the men wear sheepskin coats and boots, and they generally tie a handkerchief round their heads, so as to conceal the hair—a most unfeminine and unbecoming attire.

We travelled day and night without stopping, for we were anxious to make up for the time lost by our detention at Petersburg. Night journeying is, however, the ordinary practice in Russia, excepting for very weak and sickly people. Every one is accustomed to it, and post-horses are obtained by night as readily as by day. There is little accommodation for sleeping at the inns; and when it is necessary to rest on the road, as in the case of bad health, or of a very long journey, Russians always carry their own beds with them.

In point of view we lost little by travelling in the dark, for nothing can be more dreary or monotonous than the greatest part of the road from Petersburg to Torjok. After the first ten or twelve versts we entered a tract of forest, which stretched with but few intervals for more than a hundred miles. The whole distance indeed exhibits little but a succession of bleak open country and thick forest. The road runs generally in a straight line, and one proceeds for miles together along a dead flat, without seeing a human habitation. On each side a boggy space of fifty or a hundred yards wide is kept clear of trees, and beyond that lies an impenetrable mass of birch and fir wood, growing up so thickly that the production of fine timber is impossible; indeed I hardly saw a tree which appeared to be more than twenty or thirty years old. Here and there, where the trees had been cut down, was a neglected space full of grey stumps, and of long drawn-up saplings, bending or broken for want of their former support, many of them black and charred by fire; while the general desolation of the scene was enhanced by heavy rain, which



fell almost incessantly.\* A journey through these forests is like a sea-voyage; one spot resembling another so closely, that the traveller seems always to remain in the same place. The only part of the country through which we passed where the view is at all attractive is in the immediate neighbourhood of Valdai, a small town about two hundred versts from Torjok. Valdai stands on the edge of a handsome lake, in which is an island containing a monastery, and around the lake is some pretty broken ground covered with wood. The only two other towns of any consideration through which we passed were Novogorod and Vishny Volotchok. The former, though its name, if literally translated, would be simply New-Town, is one of the most ancient places in Russia. It is situated about two hundred versts from Petersburg, on a fine navigable river, the Volchova, over which is thrown a new and handsome stone bridge. The fortifications of Novogorod were in former times considered impregnable. The place sustained many a siege, but I believe that it retained to the last its reputation as a maiden fortress. There is in the town a ruined Kremlin, a name which seems to be generally applied to the fortified palace or citadel of a Tartar prince. A few miles south of Novogorod the road crosses a considerable river by a bridge of boats, which will soon be replaced by a solid structure of stone. Here, the last time M— was in Russia, travelling with her brother, she narrowly escaped a somewhat serious adventure. They were in an open calèche, and their *istvostchik* drove them, as these men usually do, at a gallop,† down upon the bridge, without perceiving that it was opened in the middle for a boat to pass. M—, however, instantly remarked the danger, and, pointing it out to her brother, they both called loudly to the driver to stop. This, at the pace they were going, was impossible, and carriage, horses, and passengers would inevitably have been precipitated into the river, had not the *istvostchik* contrived to run the

\* One night on our journey, as we were passing through this tract of forest, we saw a fire by the road-side and a number of horses standing with their tails to it (like English fire-worshippers). The smoke no doubt drove away the mosquitos, and the fire kept the wolves at a respectful distance, but the fire-side effect was absurd enough.

† A German driver always crosses a planked bridge or a bridge of boats at a foot's-pace, a Russian dashes across at full speed.

pole into a waggon-load of hay which was fortunately awaiting the closing of the bridge.

On the road we met frequent droves of fine, fat oxen on their way to Petersburg; they were mostly of a dun colour, and came from Little Russia and the southern provinces. The cattle of the country through which we passed were invariably small and poor, and the sheep and pigs long-legged and ugly. The sheep are of all colours, black, brown, and speckled, but seldom white.

An ordinary Russian village presents a dirty and cheerless aspect; but in some of those belonging to the crown, through which the high road passes, the wooden houses, especially when new, are very pretty and picturesque. They are built with a gable facing the street. - Across the front runs a gallery with a neat balustrade, and the weather-boards are very handsome, being carved in open work like lace. The windows have almost all outside shutters, which are gaily painted with flowers, and similar ornaments, in bright colours.

Near Novogorod is one of the military colonies established by the Emperor Alexander, who thus endeavoured, with doubtful success, to make the same instrument both sword and sickle, spear and ploughshare.

The results of the system remain to be seen, but the organization of an armed and disciplined peasantry is considered by many to be an experiment which some day or other may prove hazardous to the tranquillity of the empire. This colony has once already felt its strength in a most ferocious revolt, which, after a great part of the officers had been most cruelly put to death, was suppressed only by the presence and commanding firmness of the Emperor Nicholas in person. All that we saw in passing was a very long line of cottages lying parallel to the road. In the centre was a semicircular space, containing the church and the officers' houses. Behind lie the fields, which are tilled by these soldier-husbandmen.

Torjok is famous for leather embroidered in gold and silver, and in various colours, for reticules, slippers, and belts.

We were here to quit the Moscow road and the diligence, and we found that a coach and six, with another vehicle drawn by three horses, and called a *tarantass*, had been awaiting our

arrival for some days. The tarantass was intended for our luggage; but it is generally used for the conveyance of servants, and is, I believe, very common in Russia. This, however, being the first specimen of such a vehicle which I ever saw, struck me as singular from its novelty. The best picture which I can give of it is the body of an old cabriolet or small britschka, lashed on the middle part of a very light timber carriage. It has no springs; but the elasticity of the long birch poles which connect the two axles, and on which the body is placed, renders the motion, as I am told, tolerably easy.

After a breakfast which was preceded by the refreshment of a comfortable toilette at the inn where we stopped, we set out to perform the remaining part of our journey to this place, which is fifty versts, or about eight-and-thirty miles, from Torjok. We now bade adieu with regret to the excellent macadamized road, and enjoyed for the first time the luxury of an old-fashioned Russian road, not improved by two days of incessant rain.

Over this road we travelled but slowly, in spite of our six horses, driven, according to custom, four abreast, with a pair of leaders, the postilion being mounted on the off-horse. We stopped once to bait; and it was ten o'clock at night before we reached Krasnoe. Here we were most kindly welcomed and received by M—'s father and all the family. Comfortable apartments, consisting of bed-room, dressing-room, and sitting-room, had been prepared for us, and we were glad to enjoy a good night's rest after our journey.

As we had arrived in the dark, we had seen nothing of Krasnoe as we approached, and I was curious next morning to inspect the place, though the weather continued rainy and disagreeable. The ground slopes down from the house to a large and handsome piece of water, and is laid out in the style of an English garden, with flower-beds, trees, shrubs, and grass; and at the further extremity is a grove of handsome birch-trees, where the ground is intended to imitate a park. The whole, including the water, is very pretty, but the space is too extensive to be kept in perfect order as dress ground. At the same time, sheep and

cattle are never admitted to graze as on an English lawn, so that the turf is coarse and bad. The architecture of the church, which is close to the house, is considered remarkable, as being a species of Gothic, a style uncommon in Russia. It was built in imitation of a church erected by the Empress Catherine, to commemorate an action in the Black Sea, when the Russians burned the Turkish fleet; and it has five domes, all surmounted by the Greek cross placed over the crescent.\*

This edifice was erected by an ancestress of M—'s, a lady who built no less than twelve churches in the government of Tver, and who was rather a remarkable personage. She inherited a large fortune, and was married at the age of fifteen. She had twenty-three children, of whom ten came to years of maturity: she survived her husband many years, and was nearly ninety years old when she died. After her husband's death, if not during his lifetime, she was sole mistress of his property, which she increased till she accumulated an immense fortune by extraordinary energies and talents for business; and she died, leaving large estates to each of seven sons and three daughters.

The second day of our visit brought a decided improvement in the weather, and I had a drive with my father-in-law after breakfast, in a low phaëton, to see a little of his estate, which consists of apparently sound good land, chiefly arable. The grass land will not bear a comparison with English pasture; and the crops of hay are very light, though they are here considered particularly good this year. The horses, sheep, pigs, and horned cattle which compose the live stock, are small, and of a very inferior kind; but I am told that the expense of improving them by a mixture of foreign breeds is very much disproportioned to the profit thereby derived. The animals of every kind are necessarily housed at night, even in summer, on account of the wolves, which are very numerous and troublesome in this neighbourhood. In the morning the whole of the stock goes out to feed, and remains during the day under the protection of a herdsman, whose badge of office is a whip, which he carries over his shoulder, with a short handle, and a long heavy

\* This significant emblem is very common in Russia, as I afterwards observed.

lash trailing for several feet along the ground behind him. With this implement he soon reduces to order, and brings back to the herd, any refractory animal which is inclined to stray; the want of fences rendering his constant attendance necessary. There is an abundance of water and wood, birch, and Scotch and spruce fir, both for fuel and for ordinary uses, on the estate, which also contains lime and brick earth.

The peasants live entirely in villages, of which at Krasnoe there are four; the mansion-house, with its appendages, forming a part of the largest. This is, I believe, a universal custom in Russia, where solitary houses are rarely seen. The roofs are covered either with thatch, boards, thin sheets of iron, or guttered tiles, as slates are unknown; the most usual, because the cheapest covering for the peasants' houses, being a slovenly thatch. These houses are, however, in general, extremely warm and substantial. They are built for the most part of unsquared logs of deal, laid one upon another, and firmly secured at the corners, where the ends of the timbers cross, being hollowed out so as to receive and hold one another. These timbers are also fastened together by wooden pins and uprights in the interior. The four corners are supported upon large stones or roots of trees, so that there is a current of air in summer under the floor to preserve the timber from damp; while in the winter earth is piled up all round to exclude the cold. The interstices between the horizontal logs are stuffed with moss and clay, so that no air can enter. The windows are very small, and are frequently cut out of the wooden wall after it is finished. In the centre of the house is a stove called a *peech*, which heats the cottage to an almost unbearable degree. The warmth, however, which a Russian peasant loves to enjoy within doors is proportioned to the cold which he is required to endure without. His bed is the top of his *peech*; and when he enters his house in the winter, pierced with cold, he throws off his sheepskin coat, stretches himself on his stove, and is thoroughly warmed in a few minutes.

There are two important appendages to the village of Krasnoe, which must be mentioned, viz. the hospital for the peasants, and the bath.

The former is under the superintendence of a German doctor, who lives in the house, being engaged at a fixed stipend. This provision for the proper attendance of their people when sick is an act of humanity which, I believe, the proprietors of few estates in this country neglect if they can afford it.

The Russian bath is indispensable in every village; and there is scarcely a servant or peasant of either sex, whether young or old, who does not use it every Saturday in the year. You are aware that it is a vapour-bath. A room containing a stove is furnished with benches rising like steps one behind the other to the roof: stones are heated on the stove, and water is poured upon them, so as to fill the room, which is carefully closed, with steam. The bather commences by placing himself on the lowest bench, and gradually ascends till he reaches the highest, where the heat is greatest. He also promotes the circulation of the blood, and increases the action of the heat upon his skin, by flapping himself all over with small birch twigs. He will often rush out of the bath when at the hottest, plunge into cold water, or even roll in the snow, and return.

This weekly purification of the person must tend greatly to the health of the Russian peasant, whose long hair and beard, and sheepskin coat, are not favourable to personal cleanliness.

## LETTER IV.

Mode of life in the country—Language—Russian patronymics—System of country visiting—Guests—A dinner visit—Village fête—Russian swing—Intense heat—An enthusiast—A runaway serf.

Krasnoe, August 10th, 1837.

WE have now been here nearly six weeks, though I can scarcely persuade myself of the fact, so quickly and agreeably has the time flown by. Our life, however, has been extremely quiet and regular. We breakfast about nine, or half-past, after which M— and I retire to our own sitting-room, where we usually occupy ourselves till two o'clock, when we all assemble for dinner. After dinner some of the ladies visit our room to work, talk, and read; towards five we think of going out to walk, ride, drive, or row; at seven we have tea, after which we go out again, and often come in but just in time for supper at ten or half-past ten. We have a boat somewhat less than a barge, which I pull, often with three or four passengers on board, and, considering her tonnage, she goes wonderfully well. The lake, which has been formed by damming up the waters of two brooks flowing into one another, stretches up a hollow to a considerable extent; and as we can penetrate both of the little rivers for some distance, we can easily enjoy a pull of an hour and a half or two hours.

Besides the members of the family and ourselves, we have also, as inmates of the house, a German doctor and his wife. This gentleman, as I have already mentioned, is engaged to attend the family and the peasants in sickness. There is also a little orphan girl, noble, but penniless, whom M—'s sisters educate, according to a charitable custom extremely prevalent in Russia.

I have not made much progress in the Russian language, beyond acquiring the names of a few articles of every-day use. Indeed, strangers, who merely intend to pass a short

time in the country, have little inducement to bestow much labour upon this study, for all Russians of the educated classes speak French, with as much facility in general as their native tongue, and many of them use it almost as much in talking to one another, even when no foreigners are present. The Russian language, however, it is said, is rapidly gaining ground in fashionable society, owing to the encouragement of the Emperor, who very wisely will not allow himself to be addressed by his subjects in any other, and who is highly displeased when it is spoken or written incorrectly. One cause for the general habit of talking French, probably, is the want of bells, and the practice of having servants constantly in the ante-rooms close at hand, and within hearing of the conversation. The important precept so carefully instilled into English children, *always to shut the door after them*, is unknown in Russia.

The Russians have no words, at least none are commonly used, which correspond to *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, or *Miss*; and in speaking of or to one another, in their own language, they use the christian name, subjoining that of the person's father with the termination added—*ovitch* or *evitch*, *son of*, and *ovna* or *evna*, *daughter of*. Thus John son of Peter is called *Ivan Petrovitch*, and Anne daughter of John is *Anna Ivanovna*. In this manner, without any title of respect, the servant addresses his master or mistress, and the soldier his officer. One of the first points, accordingly, which it became necessary to settle on our arrival here, was the providing us with suitable Russian patronymics for the benefit of the servants. M— became quite naturally Maria Alexandrovna; and, after some consideration, I received the euphonious name of Rödïvön Rödïvönövitich.

The ordinary routine of life which I have described has been varied now and then by an occasional visit. The system of country visiting in Russia is carried on upon the hospitable principle that a friend is always welcome. The distances are so great, that morning calls are in general out of the question, and, excepting on particular occasions, such as a fête, invitations are rare. Neighbours sometimes send over to announce their intention of coming, if it is agreeable to you, to



dine, or to spend a night or two at your house; but there being no cross-posts between country places, the most usual thing is, that your guests arrive unexpectedly a little before the ordinary dinner-hour. This system has its inconveniences, though it is unavoidable in Russia, where, besides the difficulty of writing beforehand to prepare you for their visit, people do not always like to pledge themselves to go twenty or five-and-twenty miles, over bad roads, with the chance that the day fixed for the visit may prove rainy or disagreeable. These unexpected visits are considered highly complimentary, though, from the quantity of servants and horses with which Russians travel, the numbers to be provided for *impromptu* are sometimes rather formidable. For instance, on one occasion, when three parties chanced to arrive here simultaneously to dine, and spend a day or two, unannounced beforehand; though the guests themselves amounted only to five or six, they brought with them ten servants, and sixteen carriage-horses. A single man seldom moves with less than two servants and four horses, and the Russian country-house has no neighbouring inn to which the latter may be inhospitably consigned.

The etiquette of visiting, in general, is altogether different in this country and in England. With us, it is considered the part of the person of higher rank, or of older standing in society, to make the first advances in forming an acquaintance; whereas in Russia it rests with the new comer to select his society among those to whom he is introduced, and he calls upon those whom he desires to know.

Among our other guests were a lady and gentleman named Velikopolsky. Though they live thirty versts, or about three-and-twenty miles hence, they are looked upon as neighbours, and, in fact, they merely came to dinner, and went home again in the evening—with their footman, by-the-by, standing up behind the carriage, as if they were driving about town. This, however, it seems, is considered no hardship by a Russian servant, especially if the foot-board be upon springs. When tired of standing, he sits down with his back to the carriage, and in this way he will travel any distance.

The Velikopolskys, on taking leave, pressed us much to pay them a visit, which we accordingly did the following

week, sending a messenger a day beforehand to announce our intention. As the distance was long, we set off about eleven o'clock, and traversed an open country, for the most part over unmade roads, like the tracks across an English common. In about two hours we descended a very steep hill, at the foot of which flowed the Volga. This point is about ninety miles from the source of the river, and it is already a fine stream about two hundred yards wide, with a rapid current deep and clear, running in a narrow valley, which it appears to have cut for itself through the surrounding plain. We crossed the celebrated river on a floating bridge, and after ascending the steep hill on its further bank, and regaining the level country, we soon found ourselves at the place of our destination, the house standing on a fine elevated spot above the Volga. The windows were, however, turned away from the river, and they presented no view but that of a formal old-fashioned garden, filled with lime-trees closely trimmed, and planted in straight lines on each side of the walks. After going round the garden we returned to the house, where we found a *déjeuner* set out in the drawing-room, consisting of caviare, cheese, &c., and liqueurs. This was tasted and dinner was immediately announced, it being now three o'clock. In the middle of dinner some English bottled porter was handed round, and considerable amusement was excited by my declining the offered improvements of lemon and pounded sugar, which the Russians often drink with porter, and which our kind host had supposed indispensable to an Englishman.\* After dinner we took a short walk, and on our return found a dessert of fruit laid out in a pretty balcony filled with flowers, upon which the drawing-room windows opened. This was followed by music and singing, till, at half-past six, tea made its appearance, accompanied by ices. Immediately afterwards we took our departure, and got back to Krasnoe at ten o'clock, having paid a visit of five hours, to accomplish which we had travelled nearly fifty miles with the same horses over very indifferent roads.

A week ago we were invited to a village fête, about four-

\* We afterwards found incidentally that a messenger had been sent to a town nearly twenty miles off, to procure the lemons supposed to be so essential to the *English* palate.

teen miles hence, which was given by a relation of M—'s, in honour of his wife's *name-day*—that is, the day of the saint after whom she is called. We reached Tröitska about one o'clock, and found in front of the house a long row of tables, at which all the peasants on the estate, with their wives and children, had just finished dining. They had been well provided with beer, followed by a glass or two of spirits to each; and they were now assembled round the door of the house, shouting and singing with all their might. On the steps of the house were large baskets full of gingerbread, which the entertainer and his guests were throwing in every direction among the crowd, and the peasants, men and women, boys and girls, were scrambling for it with the utmost eagerness.

After the scrambling was over, we were entertained by a national dance, the execution of which had no great merit, especially as some of the performers were drunk. The music was a monotonous ditty, sung, or rather screeched, at the pitch of their voices by the dancers themselves. We soon afterwards sat down to dinner, and the singing was continued under the windows by four or five pairs of vigorous female lungs during the whole time that we were at table.

The swing, that most necessary appendage to all Russian country festivities, which is to be seen in every village and in every gentleman's garden, was kept in full play, till the peasants got tired of amusing themselves, and went home to their houses. About six o'clock we drove to see a neighbouring gentleman's garden, which was somewhat celebrated in the country. The proprietor received us most civilly, and showed us over his garden, which was his hobby. It was large and well kept, but for the most part dull and sombre, being laid out chiefly in straight walks, entirely shaded over by trees, which, however, were old and of a considerable size, so as to impart a degree of respectability to the place. The garden was decorated by large formally shaped ponds; at one end was a stew filled with pike, and, close by, a tawdry summer-house of painted wood.

We returned to Tröitska to tea, and drove home in the cool of the evening, or rather in the dark.

On the following day (August 5) a degree of heat set in

such as I never remember to have felt before. Its continuance was fortunately not very long, for on the 8th (the day before yesterday) we had a thunderstorm, which cooled the air, and the heat is now moderated. During the three days, however, of its intensity, it was impossible to stir out of the house till seven o'clock in the evening. I had a headache during the whole time, and sat all day absolutely gasping for breath, unable to find a cool spot. It was well for us that the days were not at the longest, and that the power of the sun was therefore somewhat diminished. The summer has been considered on the whole a very cold one in this country, where heat, such as we have just experienced, sometimes lasts uninterruptedly for weeks, bringing all the crops rapidly to perfection, and compensating by its intensity for the shortness of a Russian summer. A few years ago, so great was the drought and heat in this neighbourhood, that the grass was scorched, the earth smoked if turned up, and the forests in many places took fire from the dryness of the trees.

A man was lately brought back to Krasnoe by the police, who had run away from his wife seven years ago. When he was asked his reason for absconding, he said that he had been compelled by his family to marry when very young, that he thought it wicked to have a wife, and that his greatest desire was to become a monk. Since his return, he has thrown himself at the feet of the young ladies whenever he could meet with them, intreating them to intercede with their father to permit him to enter a convent. This, however, will not be allowed, for fear of the example being followed. This man has been to the monastery of Solovetskoi, situated on a small island in the White Sea, in a dreadful climate, and frequently cut off from all communication with the main land. Here this poor man wished to have remained, and to have entered the order, the rules of which are most severe; but as he had no passport or permission from his master to show, the monks were prohibited by law from admitting him. When he arrived here he was examined, and it was found that he had on an iron belt next to his skin around his breast, supported by iron straps over his shoulders, and with two iron

plates hanging from it, one before and the other behind ; the whole apparatus weighing between seven and eight pounds. It was riveted on, and had in some places eaten into the flesh. He had put it on by way of penance for having deserted his family, and he begged earnestly that it might not be taken off. This, however, was done ; and when he was afterwards asked if he should wish it to be given back to him, he said, " No ; that there would be no merit in wearing it now, since everybody knew of it." As he was not permitted to become a monk, his next request was, that he might be appointed to tend the cattle and sheep in the field, in order that he might not be shocked by the language and profane songs of the other peasants. This request was complied with, but I cannot say whether he has become reconciled to his situation. He is a singular, but at the same time evidently a very sincere enthusiast.

The conversation about this poor man, has naturally produced a variety of stories bearing a resemblance more or less to his case. The following is one of these anecdotes. Some years ago a peasant named Peter ran away from Krasnoe, and was not heard of for three years, when one day a man was brought to the village by the police as the runaway. Some doubt was expressed by various people as to the identity of the new comer, but he insisted that he was Peter. The fact was confirmed by his wife and his father, as well as by others who had known him formerly, and the point was at last admitted. The man lived at home with his wife for about a fortnight, but he behaved so ill, that it was determined to make a soldier of him,—a most terrible punishment in the eyes of a Russian peasant. Before, however, the threat could be carried into effect, the man again absconded, and was not seen for about a month, when he had the impudence to appear at Krasnoe at a village feast, to share in the amusements of the day. In the mean time his real character had been discovered, namely, that he was a deserter from the army, who had become acquainted with a brother of the runaway peasant in prison, where he had learned some particulars of his history, with the addition that he was in person

somewhat like himself; on the strength of which information he had grounded his imposture. When, therefore, he appeared at the feast he was immediately apprehended, and the next morning sent off to prison. He, however, said he had escaped out of gaol a dozen times before, and should do so again. Whether he kept his word I do not know; but it is a singular fact that the true Peter returned home the same night that the impostor was conveyed to prison. How far he was pleased to hear of the temporary usurpation of his conjugal and domestic rights I have not been told.

## LETTER V.

The blessing of the waters — Visit to Grouzine — Visit to Velmogie — Greyhounds and harriers — Wolf-hunting — Hare-hunt — Russian sporting — Varieties of the hare — Overturn in a gig — Hay harvest — Corn harvest — Agricultural implements — Anecdotes of Souvaroff.

Krasnoe, September 1st, 1837.

SINCE I wrote to you last we have been paying some visits, of which you will probably like to have an account. I will, however, begin my letter by relating a curious ceremony, that of blessing the waters, which we witnessed here, and which is performed everywhere in Russia on the 13th (or, according to their style, the 1st) of August and the 18th (or, as they consider it, the 6th) of January. The ceremony on the 1st of August is in commemoration of the death of the Virgin Mary, and a fast of fourteen days commences with the month.

About ten o'clock in the morning, at the conclusion of mass in the church, the priest, followed by the congregation, came down to the piece of water below the garden. He himself bore the cross, while two banners belonging to the church, adorned with sacred devices, were also carried at the head of the procession. A service was then performed: that part of the fifth chapter of St. John which relates to the pool of Bethesda, being read as a lesson; and the priest, standing upon a small platform, reverentially dipped the cross three times in the lake, after which he sprinkled the people around with the water thus consecrated, and the procession then returned to the church. The greater part of the people, however, remained at the edge of the water, which, from their proceedings, might have been supposed to be now endowed with the miraculous virtues of the pool of Bethesda. Horses were brought down from every side, and compelled to swim in the lake. Women dipped their babies in the water. Young men, girls, and boys dashed in, and swam about in every

direction, all, except a few little children, retaining their clothes. The girls appeared to swim quite as well as the boys. The day was luckily bright and fine for the exhibition of this singular scene.

On the 14th we went to spend two or three days at Grouzine, a place some thirty miles hence, belonging to an uncle of M—'s, General Constantine Poltoratzky, from a second visit to whom we only returned two days ago. Constantine Markitch—as he is called—is one of the most agreeable men I ever met with, and I can readily believe he is universally popular. His lady and his son were old acquaintances, as we had dined with them in Petersburg a few days after our arrival. The former was a Princess Galitzin, and is descended, through her mother, from the kings of Georgia, her great-grandfather having been the last who sat upon the throne from which he was driven by the Russians. His son, Madame Poltoratzky's grandfather, attempted to regain his crown, but was overcome and thrown into prison, where he died, and his grandson, her uncle, enjoys the empty title of Prince of Georgia, with large estates in Russia, given to the family in lieu of their lost dominions.\*

The house is large and handsome, and the garden upon which it looks is extensive and well laid out, with a piece of water running through it. Here we spent two days much as they might have been spent in a large English country-house, except that we dined at four and supped at eleven. The whole establishment is on a very handsome footing, with all appliances for making a visit in the house agreeable. Nothing could exceed the kindness of our reception; we repeated our visit the following week, and before we came away we promised our host and hostess, after we leave Krasnoe, to spend a short time with them at Yaroslav, of which province the General is Governor.

\* (Note to Second Edition.)—"No other princely family can trace back its genealogy to the ninth century of our era; the Bagratides occupied the Georgian throne, in one unbroken line, from the sixth century. . . . At the beginning of this century they resigned the throne in favour of Russia, and now reside chiefly at Moscow or St. Petersburg, where they retain the semblance of royal honours."—Baron von Haxthausen's 'Transcaucasia,' chap. iv.



On the 23rd we went to visit another uncle, about sixty miles hence, at a place called Velmogie. We travelled all the way with the same horses. The road was exceedingly bad, and when we reached our journey's end we found we had, from ignorance of the route, made a *détour* of seven or eight miles. That we had done so was not wonderful, as villages were few and far between, and our road was, in some places, a mere turf track through brushwood. At one spot, where we had to cross a small river, we found the bridge out of repair, no parapets, and only a road over it just wide enough for the wheels to pass. Russian coachmen, however, manage to drive heavy carriages through roads and over places which we in England should consider impracticable for wheels, and we met with no disasters. Being obliged to bait the horses on the road, we stopped at a village about half-way, and in default of an inn we put our horses in the priest's stable, and bought from him hay and corn.\* Our luncheon, which we had brought with us, we ate in the carriage, to avoid taking meat into a priest's house during a fast.

The morning after our arrival at Velmogie we found our windows looking out upon ornamental ground, laid out in excellent taste. The garden was pretty, the trees and shrubs judiciously planted, and there was a handsome piece of water which had the effect of a river. The chief fault was the error common in this country of having more grass than can be kept neat and well mown. The great beauty of the place, however, arose from the ornamental ground extending beyond the garden, which in Russia is rarely seen. The view from the house is bounded by a natural bank, which lies covered with wood in a very happy position, so as to shut out a bare and ugly tract of country, while it encloses between itself and the garden a very pretty sweep of cultivated land. This bank is laid out in walks, and at the end of it, on a small elevation above the water, is built, among the trees, a small Grecian temple, which contains a family monument, and which forms a very handsome point of view from the house. The kitchen-garden and hot-house abounded in fruit; gooseberries and currants, of which the crop was enormous, raspberries and strawberries, besides cherries, which were very fine, grapes, melons, and

water-melons. This latter fruit, so seldom seen in England, is grown in great quantities in Russia. Water-melons are always put, for some time before they are to be used, into the ice-cellar, and are brought to table as cold as possible, when they are excellent. Cherry-trees, at least those of choice sorts, are always planted in a house (without glass), the roof of which is taken off in summer, and put on again before winter, to protect the trees from the frost. Even with this precaution, however, they often perish in a winter more than ordinarily severe.

Ice is a good thing, of which for a great part of the year Russia certainly enjoys rather a superfluity; but the abundance of it in summer is a very great luxury. Instead of being taken, as in England, from any stagnant pond, and then pounded into a mass, the ice is here selected from the purest water, and placed in solid blocks in the cellar, so that it is perfectly bright and clean.\* It is not only used to ice butter, water, wine, &c., but plates full of it, in small lumps, for putting into one's glass at dinner, always appear at table. The ice-cellar answers the purpose of a larder, and even forms an appendage to every peasant's house.

Our host after breakfast invited me to see his kennel, where he had nine or ten couples of harriers and five or six brace of greyhounds, and he kindly proposed to take them out for my amusement the following morning, although the corn was in general standing, and the sporting season had not yet commenced; however, I was curious to see how Russians hunted, and it was settled that we should go out the next morning at five, if it did not rain.

The greyhounds were really magnificent animals, exceedingly tall, and altogether much larger and more powerful than any I ever saw before; their ears were silky, their coats long and waving, and their tails bushy like those of setters. Two of them are indeed a match for a wolf; and a brace of those which I now saw had the previous year coursed and killed one unassisted, the wolf having unhappily for himself crossed their path when they were on a journey. My kind host had pro-

\* Wenham Lake ice was at that time unknown in England.

mised before my arrival to arrange, if possible, a wolf-hunt against the time of my visit. For this purpose, however, it is necessary to collect a great number of peasants to drive the woods in a line, and the harvest having now begun, and the peasants being busy, the project unfortunately fell to the ground. I should have much liked to see a hunt of this kind. Wolves abound in this country,\* but it is difficult to find them, as they are very shy and cunning, and, hearing hounds at a great distance, they will seldom await their approach. Hounds can rarely run down a wolf, owing to his powers of endurance, but, his back-bone being very inflexible, he is unable to turn quickly or in a small space, while he cannot match a greyhound in speed. For this reason, when once found, he is easily caught and mastered by greyhounds if they understand their business, and seize him by the throat and not by the loins. He can then neither avoid them by doubling like a hare, nor turn suddenly upon them in defence.

To return to the subject of our visit: some neighbours arrived to dinner, which was laid out, the day being warm and pleasant, under a large lime-tree in the garden. Among the guests were a lady and gentleman named Luvoff, connexions of the family, who invited us to dine with them as we returned home, which we accordingly did, their house lying near the road. It looks over an extent of woodland which reminded me of an English park. Madame Luvoff and her family have a great talent for working in wax, of which in her house we saw two beautiful specimens, a Mameluke on horse-back, and a Magdalen in a cave. We were told also that a sledge with two horses moulded in wax, which we had seen at Petersburg in the Hermitage, and the extreme beauty and delicacy of which had excited our admiration, was the work of this lady's mother.

On the morning after our *al fresco* dinner I woke early and looked out, but as it was pouring with rain, and there seemed every probability of the bad weather continuing, I gave up all

\* In proof of which, eighteen animals have lately, though it is summer, been destroyed by wolves on the Krasnoe estate; and the peasants of a neighbouring village, returning home late from their work a few nights ago, saw no less than eight wolves together near the road.

idea of our projected sport, and went quietly to sleep again. However, about six o'clock, finding the rain had ceased, I got up, and before I was dressed I was told the master of the house was ready, and after a slight breakfast we set out together. He was equipped in a great-coat with a spencer over it, and a red comforter round his neck. He wore a pair of very loose black velveteen trousers, lined down the parts which press the saddle with black leather like a dragoon's, and strong water-proof boots without spurs. A cloth cap completed his attire. The black velveteen trousers are, I am told, commonly worn for hunting in Russia over another pair, and they are not bad things for wet and cold.

I was mounted on a rough unpromising-looking horse, which however belied his appearance, and proved to be in reality a good one. I found indeed that he was of the well-known breed of the Don Cossacks. They are famous for action and endurance, though coarse-looking and small.

We had four piqueurs, as I suppose I must call them, dressed in military-shaped frock-coats of blue cloth, edged round with gold-coloured lace, blue trousers, and caps of orange-coloured cloth, with broad black velvet bands; there was also a fifth man, who was, I believe, a valet-de-chambre, and who was dressed somewhat differently. All these were mounted on small active horses of the same description as mine. Three of them wore short swords, and had horns slung over their shoulders. Two managed the greyhounds, and the other three hunted the hounds, for the sport was a combination of hunting and coursing; the object being that the hounds should find hares in the covers and drive them into the open ground to be coursed by the greyhounds. In this manner they sometimes kill twenty in a day; they also kill foxes, and occasionally a wolf; the latter, however, as I have already said, is in general difficult to meet with.

We threw off among some bushes flanking and connecting two small woods. The hounds were uncoupled amidst a din of whips cracking, horns blowing, and men hallooing. In short, all pains were apparently taken to excite the pack to the highest possible pitch of wildness, and certainly not without success. Away they went into cover full cry. "That is

no hare," quietly remarked my companion, "it is only their joy at getting loose." The *joy*, however, was not easily subdued, and their cry continued with little interruption to be heard through the woods for about half an hour, when it was asserted they had found a hare, although, as nobody had seen it, I doubted its existence. At last a hare really made its appearance, and afforded a short course to the greyhounds, but it escaped by doubling back into the wood. Two men were always stationed outside the covers in favourable spots, each with two or three greyhounds. These dogs knew their business very well, and kept quietly in their proper places. Each wore a collar with a ring, so that he could be led if necessary, the men having long leashes for the purpose; these, however, appeared to be seldom used except for young dogs not properly broken in. When the hare turned back into cover, the hounds were cheered on, and they took a ring through some rough ground. The hare was again driven from the wood, but the greyhounds did not catch sight of it, and in the end it was lost. My object at first was if possible to prevent the greyhounds viewing the hare, in order that we might have a run and a gallop; but I soon discovered that, when from the nature of the ground there was no chance of a course, the harriers very soon either were called off the scent, or threw up their heads of themselves.

As the corn was for the most part standing, we had some difficulty in finding ground favourable for our sport, and where the ground was suitable hares were scarce. However, we found one now and then, and some we killed and some we lost; occasionally hearing a pretty burst in a wood, or having a gallop from one cover to another. We got home by about one o'clock, and I had been on the whole very well amused, though my host was very much dissatisfied with his morning's sport, because the ground had been in general very unfavourable to the greyhounds, and we had only killed in all three or four hares.

This which I have described is the universal style of what is called hunting by the Russians; they use the hounds merely to find game for the greyhounds, upon which they depend entirely for their amusement. Excepting those few who have

seen fox-hunting in England, they cannot conceive the pleasure of that style of sport, or imagine it to be otherwise than extremely dull, since they do not at all enter into the pleasure of riding to the hounds. Riding indeed is at all times little in vogue, and Russian gentlemen never think of mounting a horse as a means of conveyance. Their pleasure consists in looking at a course, and all that they require is a small active nag worth from five to ten or twelve pounds. Tame as this sport appears to our ideas, many Russians are extremely devoted to it. A gentleman whom I met the other day told me that he had a neighbour who lived for nothing but hare-hunting. He kept twelve hundred dogs (hounds and greyhounds), and killed annually on an average eighteen hundred hares. My informant calculates that this gentleman has got thrown into heaps the skeletons of about eighteen thousand horses. What a treasure these bones would be to an English farmer!

There are two kinds of hares in Russia, one of which lives entirely in the woods, and is much darker coloured in the summer than the English hare. Towards the middle of October it begins to change its coat, and it is perfectly white by the middle of November. The other sort resembles the English hare in summer; in winter its legs, ears, and belly become white, but the back retains its colour. This kind, which is called the *roussak*, lives in the fields, and is rarely found in cover, never in large woods. Its flesh and its fur are both very superior to those of the wood hare, which, however, is much more common. Both sorts, but especially the *roussaks*, are, I think, larger than English hares.

After spending two days at Velmogie we repeated our visit to Grouzine, and returned to Krasnoe, as I have already told you, two days ago. Yesterday I was driving one of my sisters-in-law in a gig, when, on a bad piece of road about nine miles from home, we were, to my great surprise, very quietly upset. Fortunately, I was driving at a foot's pace, and we both rolled out unhurt upon the grass. After picking up my companion I went to release the horse, who stood perfectly still, and I found that one of the shafts of the vehicle, which was old and crazy, had snapped in two under the body, and thereby caused

the accident. We soon obtained the assistance of a peasant, and he, with a piece of wood and a cord, in five minutes spliced our broken shaft, and enabled us to reach home in safety. I mention this little incident in illustration of the general handiness of the Russian *moujik*.

The hay harvest, which began about the middle of July, is only just finished, and the corn harvest is now proceeding actively. The hay harvest is tedious, owing to the large surface, in proportion to the produce, over which the scythe has to pass; though I am told that the crops this year were in many places three times as heavy as they were last summer. They have a few large meadows, but the greater part of the hay is procured from little patches of rough ground on the outskirts of the woods, or from little hollows which are not cultivated, owing to the water hanging in them in rainy weather. I have seen fifty mowers at work in one place, and one day they had a hundred and fifty mowing in one meadow. The hay is not dried in the field, but is loaded as soon as cut on waggons drawn by oxen, and is brought into a large yard, or close, adjoining the barn, and there it is opened out to dry. They have no hay-forks, but instead they use the butt end of the scythe-handle, or a forked stick. The latter is the only implement they have for pitching up the hay into the barn. The hay is generally housed the day after it is cut, none of it being put into ricks. They make it as soon as it is dry into large cocks. Under each cock they thrust crosswise two long stakes, leaving one end of each standing out: they then pass a rope round the cock and attach it to a horse, which draws the hay thus held together along the ground to the barn. When the distance is short, the trouble of loading and unloading waggons is thus saved, and two horses will in this manner bring in a vast quantity in the course of the day. The tenth cock, as it is brought in, is weighed and taken as the average. The whole quantity of hay made this year at Krasnoe, not reckoning the stock laid in by the peasants, which must be considerable, is about a hundred and ninety-seven tons, all harvested in excellent order. The average value of hay in the country is about eight shillings and threepence per ton; sometimes, however, it is as high as thirty-three shillings;

and at Petersburg it rises occasionally to fifty-five shillings a ton, which, however, is considered a ruinous price.

All the crops this year seem very good, except the rye, the staple food of the country. It is generally thin and bad, and in many places a total failure. It is chiefly housed by this time, the harvest here having commenced on the 15th of August, which is later than usual. Besides rye, oats are grown here in large quantities, barley and flax to a considerable extent, and a good deal of hemp. There are also a few pease, and some small patches of spring wheat, which, however, looks very unthriving. A few hops are to be seen around the villages, and potatoes and cabbages are largely cultivated for human consumption. Potatoes have not been introduced among the peasantry to any great extent till of late years; and even now the people rely much more upon the cabbage, which they have a peculiar mode of pickling for winter food, since they cannot always preserve potatoes from the frost.

They here begin sowing rye on the 18th of August, as it is the anniversary of the consecration of the church. They have a mass, after which they proceed to a field near at hand, when the priest pronounces a blessing, and offers a public prayer for the success of their labours. Though the sowing on this day is a mere form, the seed-time commences shortly afterwards in good earnest; and the young corn is already in some places beginning to make its appearance.

As soon as the corn is cut, it is dried on a sort of kiln, threshed out, and stored up in large bins in the granaries. Here there is a threshing-machine worked by horses, but the flail is used by women as well as by men. I have seen the peasants often threshing their own corn without an implement of any kind, merely taking up the sheaf by the lower end, and beating the heads upon a spot of hard dry ground, swept clean as a threshing-floor. They dry their corn by fires in large open sheds built on purpose; but casualties are, as might be expected, the frequent result of this dangerous practice. All the agricultural implements in general use are rude in the extreme. The peasant's spade is a mere paddle of wood, sometimes shod with iron, but more often not. His plough is an ineffective instrument drawn by a weak pony, and his harrow



merely consists of boughs fastened together with the twigs cut off a few inches from the base to form the teeth. His waggon does not contain above two or three barrows' load, though it is perhaps as much as his miserable horse can draw. Every peasant is a petty farmer without capital, and the wretched state of agriculture which exists is the natural consequence of the system.

My father-in-law, who, like old gentlemen in the days of Horace, is not unfrequently

“ laudator temporis acti  
Se puero—”

has many anecdotes of Marshal Souvaroff, which he is fond of relating. They are all more or less illustrative of the singular character of the man who united so much eccentricity, and even buffoonery, to his great military talents. Perhaps one or two of these stories may amuse you. When Souvaroff commanded the Russian forces in 1788, Prince Koutousoff led the assault at the storming of Ismail. He was twice repulsed; and after his second failure an aide-de-camp of Souvaroff's rode up to him with a message, neither of reproach nor of condolence, but with the information that he was appointed by the Commander-in-chief to the post of Commandant of Ismail. Koutousoff did not know what to make of this message in the moment of his discomfiture. However, the pressing business was to take the town, and, leading the assault for a third time, he succeeded. At his next interview with Souvaroff, Koutousoff asked what his meaning was in sending him the appointment of commandant at the moment of his repulse. “Oh!” said the Marshal, “I knew Koutousoff; and I knew that either Ismail would want a Russian commandant, or Koutousoff would not want a command.” This story my father-in-law had from Prince Koutousoff himself. Souvaroff used frequently to ask the young officers and soldiers the most absurd questions, considering it a proof of smartness on their part if they gave a prompt reply, and hating above all things “I don't know” as the answer. He one day went up to a sentry, and, as the man presented arms, Souvaroff said, “Tell me how many buttons there are on the uniforms of 50,000

men." "I can't say," replied the soldier very naturally; upon which the Marshal, according to his custom, began to abuse him and rate him for his stupidity. The soldier, however, knowing Souvaroff's character, took courage, and said, "Well, sir, perhaps it's not every question your Excellency could answer yourself; for instance, there are my two aunts,—could you please to tell me their names?" The man's quickness atoned for his impudence in the general's eyes, and the soldier was made a corporal next morning.

In one of Souvaroff's campaigns, a young prince, his relative, joined the army, and on his introduction was very kindly received. Shortly afterwards, being ordered on some service of hardship, the young prince asked to be relieved, appealing to the general's favour and promised friendship. "Ah," said Souvaroff, "it's very true, I've a great regard for your family; go to your quarters, and I'll send a written order which will set the matter at rest." In due time the promised paper reached the young officer; but on being opened it contained only two parallel straight lines; one inscribed with the word *Duty*, the other with the word *Favour*. The young man was mathematician enough to understand the general's hint—that in his eyes *Duty* and *Favour* could never be made to coincide. The decision was as brief and as pithy as our own Duke's "*Sail or sell.*"

## LETTER VI.

Journey to Yaroslav — Tver — Avant-courier — Cross-roads — Passing a ferry — Kashine and Ouglitch — Russian travelling — Navodka and Nachai — Arrival at Yaroslav — View from Government-House — Volga — Military church — Regiment of Cantonists — Officer taking the oaths of allegiance — Horse-fair — Dinner — Frost — Society — Card-playing — Mode of marking — Nobility — Rank and title — Military grades given to civilians.

Yaroslav, October 3rd, 1837.

My last letter made you acquainted with our projected visit to Yaroslav, where we have now spent upwards of a fortnight most agreeably. My time has been so constantly occupied, that I have never had leisure for writing to you, and I sit down now to wipe off the arrear.

We left Krasnoe on the 13th of September, being provided with a travelling carriage by the kindness of M—'s father. Our regrets at quitting the place, which had been our home for nearly three months, and our leave-takings with those from whom we parted, I shall pass over in silence. The General sent us with his own horses the first eight-and-thirty miles, having despatched a set half way over night, so that we found six fresh horses awaiting us. We hired horses to take us the remaining stage to Tver, of about two-and-twenty miles, along the high road between Petersburg and Moscow. Tver, the capital of the province, or government as it is called, of the same name, in which our time had hitherto been spent, is a city of considerable size, situated on the right bank of the Volga, which we crossed by a bridge of boats on entering the town.

Here we were obliged to sleep, as some arrangements were necessary before we could proceed on our journey, since the remainder of our route lay for the most part along a line of cross-roads little frequented, and on which no regular posting stations existed. However, owing to the kindness of the Go-

vernor, Count Tolstoy, all the difficulties which we should otherwise have met with in procuring horses were done away.

Our present hosts, when they invited us to Yaroslav, had promised to bespeak Count Tolstoy's good offices for us, and to beg him to furnish us with the means of proceeding through his government. On arriving, therefore, at Tver, I sent a note to the Governor, applying for an order for horses, and his secretary immediately came and said that everything should be done for our accommodation, and that he would return in the morning, when all would be ready for our departure. Accordingly, as soon as we were dressed in the morning, the secretary appeared, bringing with him the requisite papers from the Governor, who, he said, had also desired him, as we were foreigners, to place at our disposal a courier to enforce his orders on the road. This kind offer we gladly accepted, and the courier's activity and attention were of the utmost use, to say nothing of the uniform which he wore, and which carried no small authority in itself. As we had no place for him about the carriage, he preceded us in the tilèga, or light waggon, with a pair of horses, which is always used on such occasions in Russia.

We gave him two hours' start, in order that he might have time to get horses ready for us at every stage, and about eleven o'clock we set out ourselves. We travelled for about sixteen miles—in the course of which we changed horses without a minute's unnecessary delay—along the great Moscow road, being driven throughout at a steady gallop of more than twelve miles an hour. This pace was kept up for some time after quitting the main road, the bye road into which we struck being at first pretty good. We soon came to the bank of the Volga, which we followed for some miles; and we then crossed to the left side of the river by a floating bridge, and immediately afterwards found ourselves at the end of our second stage. Here and everywhere else we found horses in readiness—thanks to our valuable courier in advance. The stages varied in length from fourteen to thirty-four versts (the verst you will remember to be about three quarters of a mile). We were posting with eight horses, viz. two for the courier and six for ourselves; but the expense was not ruinous. A half-

penny per horse per verst, which was the price, with about eightpence a stage for the drivers, brought the whole cost to something less than sixpence a mile.

After quitting the second station, we were obliged to proceed for some miles at a foot's pace. The road lay through a marshy forest of stunted unhealthy-looking birch and fir; while a small misty rain, which began to fall, was completely in accordance with the desolate scene through which we were passing; and a more dreary picture could not easily be conceived than that which presented itself in this part of our journey. The road was what in America would have been called a corduroy road, consisting of logs of wood laid across side by side, and by no means evenly placed. The pleasure of jolting over this species of causeway for some miles you may easily imagine. At length, however, we got into an open country and into a better road. The weather at the same time improved, and by eight o'clock at night we had a bright full moon over our heads with a cloudless sky, which accompanied us to the end of our journey.

We had no inns upon the road; but about seven o'clock, at a village where we changed horses, we supped in an *isba*, or peasant's house, where we were supplied with cream and hot water for our tea, and with cups to drink it out of. This accommodation is to be had in almost every village, and from sixpence to tenpence is the usual charge. For tea and sugar, and indeed for everything else, not excepting bread, the traveller must depend upon himself. Unless he be a Russian born, he will not be able to eat the black rye-bread of the peasants.

The *samāvar*, or Russian urn, heated with charcoal, which is found in every house from the highest to the lowest in this country, is an excellent invention, insuring good tea, since the water is always boiling, and the teapot, being placed on the top, is kept quite hot.

We proceeded all night upon our journey, and about two o'clock in the morning we came to a river, which it was necessary to cross by a floating bridge. The leaders were taken off, there not being room for them with the carriage upon the bridge, which was small and narrow.

The river being shallow at the edge, the bridge could not be

brought quite close to the bank, and we therefore had to drive through water for about the length of the carriage to reach it; and then, there being no proper gangway for the wheels to run up, the bridge formed a high step or block against which they rested. The four wheelers either could not or would not draw us over this obstacle, and, after two or three vain jerks, they refused the collar altogether. We could not get out of the carriage without stepping into water up to our knees, which, in a frosty September night, we did not feel inclined to do. The bridge was so narrow that, if the leaders had been put to again, and had succeeded by a sudden spring in forcing the carriage upon the bridge, the horses probably would not have been able to stop it in time to prevent our running across into the river on the other side, where the water was deep. We, therefore, remained stationary for about half an hour, when the ferryman, who had gone for assistance to a village, returned, bringing with him about twenty peasants, who took off the horses, and, with the aid of levers, soon placed us on the floating bridge.

Nothing can exceed the ready good will with which a Russian peasant gives his assistance in case of need, especially where, as in this case, he is remote from great towns and great roads. These people were called up in the middle of the night, and they were employed up to their knees in water for some time in raising the wheels over the obstacle; but they continued the whole time in the most perfect good humour, and there was none of the swearing and abuse of one another, which would, in many countries, have been heard on a similar occasion. They apparently considered that they were merely rendering an ordinary service to their neighbour the ferryman; and, after we had crossed the river, they only solicited through him a trifle, in addition to his ordinary charge, for their assistance. The people commonly address each other as *brat*, or brother, and their superiors use the same term in speaking to them; indeed, a master, in giving an order to his servant, often calls him brother.

In about four hours after crossing the river, about sunrise, we reached the town of Kashine, where, however, we made no stop, but passed through and changed horses a verst or two

further on. Kashine is a very old town, built in a straggling manner on steep broken ground, intersected by ravines. It once possessed a kremlin, and was strongly fortified. Like all ancient Russian towns, it is filled with churches, and the various views of it which presented themselves to us in the early morning were extremely singular and picturesque. When we stopped to change horses, we breakfasted, in the same manner as we had supped the night before, at the house of a peasant, who furnished us with hot water and cream—the latter being a luxury to be met with almost everywhere in Russia.

At the next station we overtook our courier, who had horses ready to take us to the town of Ouglitch. He had already given us his services for about a hundred miles, and he offered to proceed, if we liked, to Yaroslav. However, we considered that it would be unnecessary to take him farther, as M—'s uncle, to whose house we were going, had promised to order horses to be in readiness for us at every stage in his Government, which we had now entered. We therefore dismissed our courier with a small recompence for his services, and, proceeding on our road, reached Ouglitch about one o'clock. Before we entered the town we crossed the Volga, for the third time since the commencement of our journey, on a floating bridge. We drove, as we had been directed, to the house of the Gorodnitch, an officer who is, I believe, at the head of the town police, as the name seems to imply. This gentleman, who spoke French, gave us the agreeable information that he had received the promised instructions from the Governor, and that he had horses prepared for us; inviting us at the same time into his house until they were ready. The horses, however, did not appear for more than an hour, and it was nearly three o'clock before we were able once more to set out, having still nearly eighty miles between us and Yaroslav.

Ouglitch, like Kashine, is a very old town; it contains about four thousand inhabitants, and there are no less than twenty-four churches, besides two convents. None of the churches, however, appeared to be as handsome as some of those which we had passed at Kashine.

The first stage from Ouglitch was thirty-four versts, and the

road, for a great part of the distance, lay through a heavy sand. The horses were knocked up before they had finished their work, and during the latter part of the stage the *istvostchik* got down from the box and stood upon the pole, leaning with his back against the edge of the footboard ; his object being to get closer to the horses, that his whip might have more power. We found horses awaiting us at the end of the first and second stages from Ouglitch ; but at the last station, before reaching Yaroslav, those which had been ordered for us had, owing to some mistake, been sent away, and we were detained there in the dark more than an hour. The *Starosta*, or head man of the village, whose duty it was to furnish horses for us, went from house to house to procure them, and they came, one by one, miserable-looking animals, no bigger than ponies, until at last six were collected ; after which the ceremony of arranging where each was to go, and of putting them to, occupied no small time.

In travelling in Russia, the traces, which are ropes, belong to the carriage, and not to the harness of the horses. The collars have a leather loop on each side, to which the traces are tied, and the *istvostchiks* are very particular in seeing that they are of the proper length, and in placing the horses as close as possible to their work, and in the early part of a stage one usually has a stoppage or two to adjust a trace or a pole-piece, which does not exactly please the fastidious eye of the *istvostchik*. On this occasion we were rather more than the usual time in putting to the horses, and we had rather more than the average number of stoppages in the course of the first three versts after we had started ; but this was not wonderful with a team of six peasants' horses, no two of which, in all probability, had ever been in harness together before, and some of which appeared at first inclined strongly to object to their new occupation. There seemed, however, to be a mutual understanding between the peasants who drove us and their beasts. Whether the latter were stimulated by the hopes of a feed of corn if they behaved well, as were their drivers by the prospect of a *navodka* or drink-money, I do not know ; but after a short time we all got on exceedingly well together, and were driven, as had been the case everywhere, quite as fast as



seemed possible, and much faster than I could have expected considering the nature of the road. We were well shaken and jolted about, but no accident happened.

During the whole course of the journey we seldom had a postilion who was luxurious enough to use a saddle; they generally had a bag or a mat thrown across the horse instead. Sometimes they had a rope hanging down on each side with a loop, into which they put their feet by way of stirrups; very often, however, even this rude accommodation was wanting.

The great pace at which the Russians generally drive when the road is good is very dangerous for the postilion, since, if his horse falls, the carriage cannot be stopped in time, and he is run over and probably killed. Such accidents are not uncommon on the main roads. It is astonishing how well the *istvostchiks* drive four horses abreast through the bad roads, wearing gloves like those of an English hedger, made without fingers, and holding three reins in each hand. There is no country where a little extra drink-money will do so much as here; for though the *istvostchik* is frequently the owner of the horses which he drives, he appears to care more for the *vosseim grievnik*, or eightpenny-piece, which he gets as *navodka*, than for the roubles which he receives for the hire of his horses. *Navodka* means literally *for-a-dram*, but it is now coming into fashion among the more refined *istvostchiks* to beg instead a *nachai*, or tea-money. They are very goodhumoured fellows, and generally, when they come to be paid, put on what they evidently consider a most insinuating tone and manner. They come to the carriage-door, pull off their hats, and make a low bow. Then they shake back their long hair, which this performance has brought into their eyes, and say, *Navodka batushka*, or *nachai*, as the case may be, in their most persuasive tone. *Batushka* is a sort of endearing, and at the same time respectful address, which is commonly used to superiors, as *brat* (or brother) is to equals and inferiors; it signifies literally *little father*. When they receive their money they generally look satisfied, while at the same time they often think a little more may be had for the asking, and they remark, with an insinuating smile, that they have driven very well; and if a small coin is, on this plea, added to their *navodka*, they retire highly delighted,

with a profusion of thanks and bows. One man in the middle of our journey amused us by turning round to M—, after he had received the usual drink-money, and saying, "Ah, Marie Alexandrovna, I'm sure you'll give me a good navodka, for I know your father, and your uncles, and all the family." He had probably found out who we were from the courier, or from our servant; at all events, I believe he gained his point.

All the way, after we entered the government of Yaroslav, we remarked that the road was lined on each side by a double row of birch-trees, and I now find that all the public roads in the government are ornamented in the same manner.

We arrived here on the 16th of September, at about two o'clock in the morning. A servant soon made his appearance and conducted us to a very comfortable set of rooms which were prepared for our reception, and which, besides being in other respects very handsomely furnished, boast the unusual luxury of having their floors entirely covered with carpet. We got some tea, and then went to bed as soon as possible, though not without having admired the superb moonlight view from our windows over the Volga, which here is a noble stream about seven hundred yards wide.

This house, which was originally built as a palace for a member of the imperial family, forms a very splendid residence for the Governor, and the situation is exceedingly fine, as the town lies at the back, while the windows in front look upon a terrace at the foot of which flows the Volga. The terrace, which stands at a great height above the water, extends for more than a mile, commanding a fine view of the river and the country beyond. A very considerable trade is carried on in the town, which is large, handsome, and flourishing; the shops are exceedingly well supplied with goods, and many of the tradesmen, I am told, are very rich. Yaroslav contains twenty-eight thousand inhabitants, and forty-three or forty-four churches. Besides the terrace above the Volga, there is a handsome boulevard, and also a public garden. There are a number of large houses in the town, which in the winter are inhabited by gentlemen's families, so that the society at that season is very good.

On the Sunday, two days after our arrival, we attended the performance of mass at the military church, by the invitation of the commanding officer, Colonel Goulaivitch, a fine soldier-like man, who, as well as his lady, has shown us great attention and civility since we have been here, and both of whom we have been fortunate enough to meet almost daily. The church was entirely filled with soldiers, and the effect produced by so many voices chanting in unison the hymns and responses was exceedingly fine.

This regiment is a military institution which has been established here about two years, for the purpose of educating and training up soldiers' sons; the object being to provide a supply of intelligent well-taught non-commissioned officers for the army. The regiment is composed of three battalions, each more than a thousand strong. The first battalion consists of little boys up to the age of about fifteen; the second, of lads from fifteen to seventeen or eighteen; and the third is effective; but in the whole corps there is hardly a soldier more than twenty years old.

After the conclusion of the service the men were paraded before the Governor, and on this occasion I heard for the first time the singular salutation of the Russian soldiers to their inspecting officer. Each company as it marches past gives a peculiar shout, at a given signal, as if with one voice, and with a sort of sudden crash, the effect of which is very striking. After the parade the Colonel took us all over the barracks, which are airy and well organised; everything seemed in excellent order, and the dormitories and other apartments clean and well ventilated. The boys are instructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic; they also learn drawing and various branches of professional knowledge, and they are all taught some trade. Nearly every part of the soldiers' equipments is made at home, even including the patent leather for their belts, which seemed to be of very good quality. Portrait-painting is among the arts practised by the soldiers: and we were shown pictures of the Emperor, the Colonel, and most of the officers, very creditably executed by one of them.

*After making the tour of the establishment, we went to see the*

boys sit down to dinner. They first sang a hymn standing in their places, and, when they had finished, the sound of a bugle gave the signal for them to be seated. They seemed exceedingly comfortable, and everything looked very clean. A certain number acted as waiters to the rest, a service which they all take in turn. In the middle of the room on an elevated platform was a small unoccupied table, at which the Colonel told us that offenders were made to dine as a punishment. I have since seen the military hospital, which was very clean and seemed well conducted. On the ground-floor is the dispensary and surgeon's room, the patients being all upstairs; at the head of each patient's bed is a board, on which is inscribed his name and the nature of his complaint, and behind the board is placed a paper in which the medical man in attendance is required to insert a daily register of the symptoms, treatment, &c., of the patient; so that the Inspector of the hospital, on making his rounds, may at all times be able to judge whether proper skill has been exercised, and due attention paid, by the subordinates.

Colonel Goulaivitch invited us the other day to his house, to witness the taking the oaths of allegiance and fidelity to the Emperor on entering the service, by M—'s young cousin, the Governor's son, who has just received his first commission. The colours of the regiment were displayed in the dining-room, and under them were placed on a table a large Bible and a cross. A priest was in attendance in his robes, and there were also about a dozen cantonists, as the young soldiers are called, who were to officiate as choristers upon this occasion. The new ensign repeated after the priest a long oath, holding in his right hand a corner of the colours. He then knelt down and kissed the Bible and the cross, and the ceremony was concluded by a hymn sung by the cantonists.

I went about a fortnight ago with General Poltoratzky to a horse-fair at a large straggling village two or three-and-twenty miles hence. There were a good many horses shown, but few fine animals; they were, however, very cheap. The General bought one as a carriage-horse for three hundred roubles (about twelve pounds) which would have been worth forty or fifty pounds in *England*, as he was a handsome well-sized

horse, sound, and only five years old. The scene was amusing enough, and as unlike an English fair as can be imagined. There were a good many gentlemen present, most of them in undress uniforms, and many with crosses at their button-holes. We walked through a refreshment-booth filled with peasants and horse-dealers, and found them all as quiet as possible, and, with hardly an exception, drinking tea. These people do not put sugar into their cups in the ordinary way, but they either hold a lump between their teeth and sip the tea through it, or else they hold the sugar in the left hand, and nibble off a little bit now and then, as they drink their tea. We were not destined this day to suffer from hunger. First of all, when we were in the midst of the fair, two or three large water-melons were brought, and we all sat down to eat them on the spot, some on the grass and others on the shafts of a waggon, while his excellency the Governor compromised his dignity by sitting in the middle on a reversed tub. Shortly afterwards we were summoned to a luncheon, which abounded in champagne and good things of all kinds, and which might well have passed for a dinner. This entertainment was given by the great man of the village, namely, the steward of the proprietor, who was himself an absentee. The luncheon was no sooner over than we set off for a country-house which lay on our road home, and where I found that we, and most of the gentlemen whom we had met with, were engaged to dine.

I confess this was a pleasure I could have dispensed with, having dined already, as I had supposed. However, the offered hospitality was not to be declined, and we arrived at the house a party of more than twenty; a force evidently stronger than our entertainer had anticipated in the morning; for, although it was dinner-time when we reached the house, we waited full two hours before we sat down to table. After all, we dined and reached home before nine o'clock—a fact which will remind you that we are not keeping English hours.

We have now a sharp frost, and two days ago (the 1st of October) we were reminded of the approach of winter by finding in the morning the roofs of the houses white with

snow. We, however, are armed against the cold, as we have provided ourselves, since we came here, with furs and other warm clothing for the winter. The shops, as I have already said, are well supplied, especially with furs; but it is by no means agreeable on a cold day to make purchases which require a little time in selecting: for, according to the old Russian custom, the shops have no stoves or fireplaces. The shops do not here, as in most countries, adjoin the residences of the tradesmen to whom they belong, but are all collected together in a sort of bazaar, a large building consisting of warehouses with shops in front, and in which no fire is allowed for fear of accidents. The tradesman spends the day in his shop, and only goes home at night. When the weather is cold he wraps himself up in furs, and keeps himself warm by drinking enormous quantities of hot tea, which is retailed in the streets to them and to the droschka-drivers who stand for hire, by people who are constantly going about with a portable samāvar or urn, kept hot by charcoal, and with cups fixed in a belt, and strapped round their waists. The bazaar or collection of shops in all Russian towns is called the *Gastinæ Dvor*, or *Public Court*.

Every Sunday morning, and every fête-day, the governor of Yaroslav holds a sort of levee—that is to say, a crowd of official persons in full uniform assemble before breakfast to pay their respects: and twice a week his lady is at home to all the people who are inclined to spend the evening, and a large society is generally assembled to play cards and sup.\* Besides this, we have had dinner parties two or three times a week, and the party living in the house is considerable in itself. The present time, however, is not the gay season at Yaroslav, as most of the families who compose the society in the winter are still absent at their country houses. The establishment in this house is large even in Russia, especially for a town, but it would be considered enormous in England. Here, however, assessed taxes are unheard of. In the house about a hundred people are maintained; and upwards of

\* (Note, second edition.)—Among the visitors at the Governor's residence during our stay at Yaroslav was Prince Gortchakoff—the general, not the diplomatist.

thirty handsome horses, chiefly for harness, are kept in good condition in the stables.

The Russians appear to be extremely devoted to cards, playing on Sunday as much as any other day. Whist is the usual game. They sit down before dinner, which is commonly at three or four o'clock, and, when it is announced, they leave their cards on the table, and resume their game the moment they return from the dining-room, continuing to play from that time till the party disperses; so that, excepting for those who are no card-players, there really is no conversation. I observe everywhere a custom which is in our eyes exceedingly slovenly, namely, that of marking the state of the game by scoring it in chalk upon the table-cloth, instead of using counters. Pieces of chalk, and brushes for erasing the figures, are always put on the table with the cards.

I will conclude my letter by a few remarks on the subject of Russian rank and title, which do not go together as in England. The Russians have but two titles of honour—that of *knaize*, prince or duke, and *graf*, count. There are also *barons*, but they are not originally of Russian extraction, but German, usually from Courland and Livonia. All these titles multiply themselves *ad infinitum*,\* being enjoyed equally by every descendant of the possessor, in the male line, without any distinction in favour of the eldest branch: they are, therefore, of comparatively little value, except as procuring consideration in society. All legal rank, privilege, or precedence in Russia is either military, or is measured by a military grade. A prince who is an ensign must give way to the son of a shopkeeper who is a lieutenant, and the daughter of an untitled general will walk before a princess whose father is only a colonel.† Though, however, titles are of

\* As an instance of this, I may observe that of the name of *Galitzin* only there are, at present, no less than three hundred princes. How many princesses there may be I do not know, but they must be very numerous.

† There is, however, a title of Prince which is conferred rarely, and only for long or distinguished services, and which is therefore highly valuable. The Prince Volchonsky; Field-marshal Count Paskievitch, Prince of Warsaw; and the Prince of Italy, Count Souvaroff, are noblemen holding this rank. Princes of this class have the style of Highness, and the title descends only to the eldest son and to his heirs male; not passing to all the descendants, like other Russian titles.

no account, nobility confers great privileges. None but a noble can possess serfs, without which landed property in this country is of little value. The nobles are free from the conscription, which presses heavily on all other classes. They are in no case liable to the knout and other corporal punishments; and they can always claim to enter the service, as under-officers at least, receiving a commission, or attaining an equivalent rank as civilians, in three years at furthest, excepting in cases of misconduct. I should add, that being noble in Russia, as in some other continental countries, corresponds to the being a gentleman in England, although the Russian assumes the coronet and full-faced helmet with closed visor, instead of the simple crest and side-faced helmet of the untitled English gentleman. The Russian noble does not, however, use supporters to his arms, unless they have been specially granted to his family. Nobility is earned by service or acquired by inheritance. Every one who serves the Emperor, either in a civil or military capacity with the rank of officer, is noble, and may, therefore, wear a coronet on his seal or carriage, whatever he may have been by birth. Unless, however, he was noble by birth, his nobility does not descend to his children if he has not reached, at least, the grade of major; after which his family is placed in the position of hereditary noblesse.\*

A census is taken at certain intervals, and if, during three generations, any family from father to son have failed to enter the service of the crown, it loses its nobility, it is erased from the list, and its members are reduced to the class of ordinary peasants. Excepting the clergy, who in Russia are a class apart, the members of all branches of the liberal professions are, as I have already told you, considered as "in the service;" and each individual is classed with entire reference to military rank. One civilian has the grade of ensign, another of lieutenant, and so on, up to full general. From the rank of major-general upwards, all persons, with their wives and daughters, so long as the latter remain unmarried, have the style of Excellency. Their sons

\* The result naturally is, that nobility and penury are often combined. I have known the case, and it is by no means uncommon, of a lady's-maid who had as good a right as her mistress to the display of a coronet.



necessarily can enjoy no rank but that which they themselves attain in the service. A general's daughter ranks with a colonel's wife; but a lady, on marrying, loses whatever title or precedence she may have held by right of birth, or by an office at court, such as that of maid of honour, and can only assume that of her husband. Less fortunate than our honourable and right honourable young ladies, who retain their rank or title after marriage, the Russian general's daughter is no longer her Excellency when she has become the captain's wife, and *Mademoiselle la Princesse* \* must descend to plain *Madame* if she weds an untitled husband.

\* I ought perhaps to apologise for the occasional use of a French expression, since French is neither the language in which I am writing nor that of the people I am describing. It is, however, the language commonly used by Russians in their intercourse with foreigners, and indeed, to a great extent, in society among themselves. During my visit to Russia, therefore, I heard French phrases universally applied to persons and to things, and these I have in some few cases retained, where, as in titles of courtesy adopted by themselves, there appeared to be no exact English equivalent.

## LETTER VII.

Exhibition of fire-engines — Fire establishments in the hands of Government — Account of the system — Village regulations — Frequent occurrence of rural fires — Visit to a monastery — Ex-archbishop — A Te Deum — Convent treasures — Origin of the use of images in the Greek Church — Visit to Riepinsk — Going to bed — Mayor of Riepinsk — Towing-barge — Project of establishing steam on the Volga — A name's day — Performance of mass by the archbishop — Mode of communicating the death of the Emperor Alexander to his mother — Treasures of the monastery at Yaroslav — Conclusion of visit at Yaroslav — Post-horse system — Feldt jägers.

Yaroslav, October 4th, 1837.

WE were much interested a few days ago by a little impromptu exhibition, which displayed the efficiency of the fire-establishment, and the alertness of the men: before, however, commencing any description of what we saw, I must give you a short account of the system.

The fire-establishments here are not, as in England, in the hands of insurance companies, but under the immediate control of government. The firemen are soldiers, and the horses, engines, &c., are the property of the crown. The whole, however, appears to be well organised, and the general regulations laid down by law to be extremely good. In the towns watchmen are stationed day and night on the tops of high towers, which are built in various quarters, so as to command the town; and at the foot of each tower is an establishment of firemen, horses, and engines, which are or ought to be always ready at a moment's notice. As soon as the watchman on the tower discovers a fire he rings a bell, which gives the alarm to the firemen below, while at the same time, by a telegraph, which can be used either by day or night, there being in the latter case a certain arrangement of lanterns, he points out the direction of the fire, and warns the establishments in other quarters of the town to send their assistance. As soon as the train of

engines is ready, it proceeds at full speed through the streets, neither stopping nor turning aside, being preceded by a horseman, who gallops along, shouting and warning all persons to clear the way. If it is dark, the leading engine carries a bright light high up on a pole, which is easily distinguished, by its position, from the lamps of a carriage as it moves along. When a fire breaks out at St. Petersburg, it is the duty of the aide-de-camp in waiting immediately to inform the Emperor, even if the latter is asleep in bed. When a fire is at all considerable the Emperor always gets up and goes to it himself; in other cases the aide-de-camp is ordered to go to the spot, and at the conclusion to return and report what loss has been sustained, with the general result of the misfortune.

In the country the regulations are very good, and it is the duty of the *starosta* or bailiff of every village to see that they are enforced, though they are nevertheless in many cases totally neglected.

In the villages where the rules are carried into effect, every house has a small board affixed to it, on which is painted a number, and under the number is a figure of some implement useful at a fire; on one being drawn a bucket, on another an axe, on a third a ladder or a pole with a hook at the end for pulling down burning thatch and rafters. The moment a fire is discovered in the village, the inhabitant of every house is bound to appear provided with the implement depicted outside his door. Besides which there are various regulations for establishing order in the operations, such as the appointing one man out of a certain number to be the captain of the gang, and to direct their proceedings.

If the rules were always properly enforced, it would not be easy in a country village to contrive better arrangements than these: since ready assistance with a proper number of all useful implements is provided in case of fire, and confusion is as far as possible avoided. It is the duty of the *starosta* to visit the houses from time to time in order to see that the implement belonging to each is ready and fit for use, and even that the buckets are supplied with water.

The necessity for such precautions is unfortunately exemplified by the frequent occurrence of rural fires. The peasants,

as I have already observed, live entirely in villages. Their houses and outbuildings are almost universally constructed of wood, and covered with a loose thatch; and, therefore, if a fire once breaks out, it spreads with inconceivable rapidity from house to house, and whole villages are sometimes thus destroyed. The period when these misfortunes are most common is in the autumn, immediately after harvest, when the peasants are drying their corn at fires made in wooden thatched buildings.

If the proprietors are careful in placing their drying-houses at a safe distance from one another, and from the dwellings, and also in prohibiting the peasants from stacking the whole of their produce close around them, the worst that can ensue from an accident is the destruction of a drying-house with the corn which may happen to be in it at the time: but nothing can exceed the characteristic imprudence of the Russian peasants. The orders of their masters are disobeyed. To save a little trouble, the whole of their produce is brought at once as near as possible to the drying-house; a fire breaks out, and a year's provision is destroyed in an hour. The master may inflict punishment for the disobedience of his orders, but the loss to a great degree falls on himself; for the law decrees, that if, from a failure of crops, or from any other misfortune, the peasant should be in want, his master shall supply him with the necessary provisions.

The exhibition which introduced this subject was as follows. —I was walking on the Boulevard with M— and her uncle, when the latter proposed to us to see the fire-establishment, which was close by. We readily assented, expecting merely to be shown over the place, and to hear the system explained. As we entered the yard, however, the general made a sign to the watchman on the look-out tower, the latter touched the alarm-bell, and instantly all was in a state of activity. Men sprung out from every quarter; the engines were run out of the houses; horses were brought full trot out of the stables ready harnessed, and were put to; and in the space of four minutes and a half from the original signal, fourteen vehicles, with thirty-three or thirty-four horses attached to them, were drawn up in a line in the yard ready to start. The machines

consisted of fire-engines, carriages conveying barrels full of water, ladders, and an apparatus for covering the walls and roofs of houses adjacent to the fire with a screen of sail-cloth. The water-barrels are necessary, since there are no pipes or fire-plugs in a Russian town.

At a second signal from the Governor, the engines, &c., filed one after another out of the yard, and went slowly down the street, the men having taken their proper places upon them. At the further end of the street they turned, and came thundering back at full gallop. Some of the machines were drawn by two, and others by three, horses abreast, all being strong and serviceable animals. When we expressed our admiration at the rapidity and alertness shown in getting the horses and engines ready for action, the General assured us that, so far from any preparation having been made, his appearance was totally unexpected, and that, the day being a fête, all the men were absent who could be spared from duty. And the truth of this was proved by the arrival of the master of police at a gallop in his droschka, he being the chief of the fire-establishment, and having just been informed that the engines were rattling through the town. Whether it was for actual service, or, as proved to be the case, merely for inspection by the Governor, this officer did not know till he arrived on the scene of action.

A few days after this we were invited to see an exhibition of the manner of proceeding and working the engines in case of a fire: but the display on this occasion was not nearly so interesting to me, since everything was prepared beforehand; while the activity on the former day furnished a proof of the real utility and good organization of the establishment, and of the efficiency and alertness of the men in a case of emergency. The powers of the engines, and the manner in which they were worked, as displayed in this second exhibition, could not stand a comparison with the performances of London engines in the hands of London firemen; but I think that few provincial towns in England could boast of superiority in these respects over Yaroslav. Besides the engines, the chief implements to be remarked were ladders, divided for the convenience of packing like the parts of a telescope, and drawn out

by pulleys, so as to reach when required to a very considerable height; grappling irons for pulling down walls; and the apparatus, which I have already mentioned, of sail-cloth stretched on poles, which could be hoisted up like the sails of a ship, and placed in front of a house, with other pieces of sail-cloth for laying over roofs. These cloths, being kept constantly wet by means of the engines, form a great protection to the timber walls and boarded roofs which are so common in a Russian town; and the houses are easily covered, being generally low, and frequently not more than one story in elevation. In St. Petersburg the building wooden houses is now wisely forbidden by law.

On the morning of the 21st the Governor's brother-in-law, Prince André Galitzin, proposed to me at breakfast to accompany him to the monastery of Tolga, about seven miles hence, where he was going to pay a visit to the ex-archbishop of Yaroslav,\* a prelate who has resigned his episcopal functions, and who now lives in retirement in the convent. We went in a light low calèche belonging to my companion, with three horses abreast, or, as this is called in Russia, a *tröika*. The horses had cost, as I was assured, but five pounds each; yet we went sometimes at the rate of eighteen, and never less than fifteen, miles an hour, the middle horse trotting all the time while the others galloped. A light open calèche is, in some respects, much better for Russian travelling than a close carriage, as it is less liable to upset in bad roads; and three or four horses being always sufficient to draw it, no leaders are required, and therefore in going fast the life of a postilion is not risked. For a long journey, however, especially with a lady, the comfort of a close carriage is very requisite.

The monastery being on the further side of the Volga, we crossed the river in a boat, and landed at the gate of the convent. The reaches of the river in both directions are here extremely fine, and the banks handsome and well wooded. We were received by the archbishop, with whom we sat some time; however, as he only spoke Russian, the conversation lay entirely between him and my companion. He was dressed

\* Every government in Russia is an episcopal or archiepiscopal see. No one but a monk can become a bishop.

in a caftan or wrapper of dark-coloured silk, with a shawl sash round his waist, and a monk's cap of black velvet on his head; the monk's cap being in the shape of a hat without a rim, and covered by a black hood hanging down behind. A Russian, on saluting or taking leave of a priest, always kisses his hand, while the priest in return makes the sign of the cross, and blesses him. After our visit to the ex-archbishop we proceeded to the church, which is old and curious, the walls and roof being entirely covered with paintings of saints. In the corner of the church stood a man with wax-candles for sale, two or three of which my companion bought, and, having lighted them before an image, he ordered a *Te Deum* (a short service, which was performed by three monks), for which he paid a fee of ten roubles. During the reading of a passage from the Gospel he bent himself in an attitude of the utmost humility under the book, so that it rested on his shoulders like the globe on an Atlas; and he continued in that position till the monk had done reading. He also paid great adoration to an image of the Virgin which was over the altar, and to which he afterwards called my attention. It was considered remarkable, not only as being set in a broad frame of pearls, the value of which must have been very great, but also from a miraculous legend connected with its history.

After the service some of the monks took us to see the treasures of the convent, consisting of robes for the archbishop; some of velvet embroidered with gold, and others of cloth of gold, with mitres to match; many of which were very handsome, and some curious from their antiquity. There were also Bibles bound with gold, and decorated with jewels; and gold chalices and crosses, with other ornaments for the church. After this display we were shown the refectory, and we immediately afterwards left the convent. The monks were an ill-favoured race, with vulgar features, and not a fine or dignified countenance among them. Monks and nuns never eat meat; but they are allowed the use of eggs, butter, and milk, excepting during the fasts of the church.

As soon as we were seated in the boat to return, my companion begged me not to suppose that when I saw him kneel-

ing before an image\* he was paying adoration to the image itself, but to that which it represented. He added, that the Greek church grounded the use of images on the well-known legend, which they receive as true, of Abgarus, King of Edessa, receiving from our Saviour a letter accompanied by his portrait.

I was afterwards told the story of the image which I had seen in the church. It is said to have appeared by night in the midst of a burning bush some centuries ago to a certain archbishop, who took possession of it. He was afterwards directed by dreams to build the monastery and church of Tolga, and to place it there.

The following day the Governor proposed to me to go with him to an estate of his which he wished to visit, about sixty miles hence, on the Volga, near the town of Riepinsk; and after spending the night there to return the next day. Accordingly, after an early dinner, we set off, accompanied by Madame Poltoratzky's brother, Prince A. Galitzin, and Colonel Shipoff, the General's aide-de-camp. The road was but indifferent; however, we reached our journey's end in a little more than five hours and a half, including the delay of changing horses twice. This operation is not performed here quite as fast as at Hounslow, but a governor travelling within the limits of his own province does not tolerate much delay on the road. The house where we were to sleep was merely the residence of the superintendent, with a couple of rooms reserved for an occasion like the present. One of these was appropriated to Colonel Shipoff and the Prince; while my host and I were to bivouac upon a couple of sofas in the other. In due time our companions took their leave, our room being constantly besieged by a variety of the people about the place, coming to speak to their master on business, and to bring in their reports: while the passage was filled with others waiting for their turn of admission. However, the Governor wound up his watch, pulled off his coat, and at last fairly got into bed, still continuing his audience to the crowd in waiting. The court being held with open doors, I plainly saw, from the number of people who still thronged the passage, that, if I intended to go to bed at all, I

\* It is almost unnecessary to remark that the consecrated images of the Greek church are invariably paintings and not sculptures.



must follow the example of his Excellency, and perform the ceremony of undressing in public. As soon as I was in bed, the whole scene amused me much, and, had I possessed a talent for drawing, there were abundant subjects before me for an excellent sketch. The expectant crowd in the passage pressing forward as far as they thought they could venture, with their bearded faces half in light and half in shade, formed the background; while in the room there were always two or three prominent figures, conversing with their master, who reclined at his ease on the couch opposite to me, smoking his pipe, as he transacted his business.

At length,—

“ The chamber was cleared,  
The train disappeared,”

and a servant brought in a splendid melon, which, with a glass of wine, furnished us an excellent supper in bed; while our companions came back in their dressing-gowns and sat talking for some time, so that it must have been late before the candles were put out and we composed ourselves to sleep. This, unfortunately, proved a vain attempt, for the room, having been long uninhabited, swarmed with fleas, which gave neither of us a moment's respite till near morning.

The next day, after walking about, and looking at a new house which is in progress, and which will command from the windows a magnificent view of the Volga, we drove to the neighbouring town of Riepinsk, where a very large trade is carried on in corn and tallow. We proceeded first to the house of the Mayor, who gave us an excellent luncheon and a bottle of champagne, and who afterwards accompanied us round the town.

He was an admirable specimen of the true old-fashioned Russian tradesman; a tall, portly old man, with a fine grey beard, and a long blue surtout, buttoned according to custom on the left side, and with black boots drawn over his trowsers.

There was not much to see; the principal objects being the Exchange, and a church which was in building, to the top of which we walked up inclined planes. The river was exceedingly full of barges, and we went on board one of the largest, which was used merely as a tow-boat to drag a loaded train.

Its progress against stream must be exceedingly slow. An anchor is carried out ahead, to which the barge is warped up by means of a strong cable and a capstan turned by about two-and-twenty horses, which work below deck, as in a threshing-machine. There were fifty horses on board for the purpose of relays. There is water communication all the way from Riepinsk to Petersburg, the distance being about nine hundred miles, while by land it is but three hundred and fifty. The project of steam upon the Volga is now talked of, and a company is formed to carry the scheme into effect; great doubts, however, appear to be entertained as to the practicability and success of the undertaking. I do not understand the difficulties, but I believe they arise partly from shallows or other natural obstacles in the river, and partly from the opposition of persons interested in maintaining the present system of traffic. Were the proposal executed, the steam-vessels would run from Yaroslav to Kazan and Astrakan.\*

After dinner we set off on our return to Yaroslav, and arrived here a little before midnight. The 29th, being St. Sophia, was the name's-day of Madame Poltoratzky, and during the whole morning numbers of visitors of all classes were constantly arriving to congratulate her and bring her presents. Her tables were covered with china, books, embroidery, and carpet-work; while in the large ball-room were placed two or three tubs of water, containing two sturgeons, and a quantity of sterlet alive, which had been brought by some of the tradesmen of the town. The sterlet is an excellent fish, peculiar to the Volga and to one or two other rivers: it partakes of the migratory habits of the salmon, descending periodically into salt-water. It is not, however, the least like the salmon in flavour or appearance.

We had a large party at dinner, including five or six bearded tradesmen in their long caftans; and one of the sturgeons which appeared on the occasion proved excellent. The day was concluded by a ball.

On Sunday we went to hear the Archbishop perform mass in the church of his convent; the service being different from

\* See Oliphant's 'Russian Shores of the Black Sea in 1852,' when steam-power had been introduced on the Volga.

that in which an ordinary priest officiates. The Archbishop was magnificently dressed in a robe of crimson velvet embroidered with gold, with the ribbons and crosses of various orders round his neck. On his head he had a mitre, also of crimson velvet, covered with jewels; the mitre is not cloven, but is a high cap with a round top bulging out. At the conclusion he stood before the altar, while his mitre and the robes in which he had officiated were taken off by the priests in attendance. A monk's gown, with two stars on the breast, was then put on, as well as a monk's cap; the crosses were replaced around his neck, and the Archbishop walked out of the church, blessing the congregation as he went. He was a little old man, apparently much more feeble and infirm than his predecessor, whom I had seen at Tolga, and who had retired owing to his age and consequent inability to perform the duties of his office. The see of Yaroslav is one of the best in Russia; the revenues amounting to about two thousand five hundred pounds a-year.

Nearly the whole service in the Greek Church is chanted, and a good deal of incense is used. The officiating priest stands during the greater part of the time with his back to the congregation, being always assisted by a deacon, who, whenever he gives him or receives from him a book in the course of the ceremony, kisses his hand. At the conclusion of mass the cross is brought forward by the priest to be kissed by the congregation. This latter ceremony was made the means of communicating to the Empress-mother the death of the late Emperor Alexander. On hearing of the illness of her son at Taganrog, the Empress ordered a mass to be celebrated for his recovery at the Kazan church of St. Petersburg. In the middle of the service the Grand Duke Nicholas was called out and was informed that the tidings of his brother's death had arrived. He communicated the intelligence to the Metropolitan, who was officiating, and when the latter, at the conclusion of the service, presented as usual the cross to the Empress, it was enveloped in black crape.

On Monday we went to see the treasures of the convent, the church of which we had attended the day before. We were *taken by a monk* into a strong-room, the neglected appearance

of which little bespoke the riches it contained. The sides of the room were covered by miserable deal wardrobes, displaying, when opened, a great quantity of robes; some of the richest silk or velvet of various colours embroidered with gold and silver, and others of gold or silver tissue. These, however, sunk into insignificance when compared with the dresses for the use of the Archbishop on high ceremonials, which were embroidered with jewels instead of gold. The most beautiful was a robe of sky-blue velvet, with a broad border and other ornaments of a beautiful pattern of leaves and flowers in fine pearls, of which nearly six pounds weight were employed on this suit alone. There were other robes of velvet almost equally rich, and all had mitres to match, which were absolutely covered with jewels. One mitre was valued at about five thousand pounds. There were also Bibles bound in gold and covered with jewels; Crosses and Images set in diamonds, emeralds, and other precious stones; and several handsome services of plate for administering the Communion. One of these services was of pure gold, richly and beautifully chased, of the weight of twelve pounds avoirdupois. The riches of this convent are chiefly owing to the munificence of the ancient princes of Yaroslav, but I am told they are nothing in comparison to the treasures which are heaped up in the convent of Tröitska, situated between this place and Moscow. The late Archbishop of Yaroslav found, on his accession to the see, that there were no less than sixty-four pounds weight of fine pearls, of which no use was made, but which were laid up in bags like seeds. Being a person of taste in such matters, he, in concert with the Abbess of a neighbouring convent, employed the pearls in embroidering the beautiful robes which I have just described. They have, however, still remaining unused, about eleven pounds weight of pearls. Besides these things they have in the church a Shrine of great size, of solid silver; an Image set in broad frame of pearls, which must be of immense value; and also many precious and costly articles which I have not enumerated. The interior of the church is almost covered with gilding.

Although the dresses of the prelates, and even of the ordi-

nary priests, are made and ornamented so magnificently, the forms of the robes are exceedingly stiff and ungraceful.

2 We have passed our time here so agreeably, and have received so much kindness, that we are preparing, with no small regret, to leave Yaroslav to-morrow. Among the other attractions of the house must not be forgotten, in the heart of Russia, a number of modern English books which we have met with, and among the rest 'Blackwood's Magazine,' which is regularly taken in by our hostess, who understands and speaks English exceedingly well, and who occupies herself much with English literature. The kind and repeated invitations which we have received to prolong our stay are highly agreeable and flattering; but we are obliged to shut our ears to temptation, since the season reminds us that it is time to seek our winter quarters. My next letter will be addressed to you from Moscow, a hundred and eighty miles hence, where we shall spend a few days on our way southwards.

We have been advised, instead of travelling to Moscow with post-horses, to make a bargain here with a man who undertakes to forward us all the way; by which means we avoid the chance of being detained for want of horses.

We have accordingly agreed with an *istvostchik* to pay him a sum equivalent to about five pounds ten shillings for the whole journey, with six horses; and we have received from him a paper on which are marked the distances, and the proportion we are to pay at each station. The stages are somewhat longer than those of the regular post, but this will be no disadvantage to us, as the Russian horses possess great powers of endurance, and more time is lost by frequent changes than is gained in increase of speed.

The post-horses are an important source of revenue to government, the contractors who furnish them paying highly for the privilege. At every station there is a postmaster, an officer in the imperial service, whose duty it is to prevent unnecessary delay, and to ensure regularity in furnishing the horses, which are supplied sometimes by the proprietor of the village, but more often by peasants who make this their occupation, and who are properly called *yemstchiks*; they usually

drive their horses themselves. At each post-house is a board, on which is marked the number of horses belonging to that station, which of course is, or ought to be, proportioned to the traffic on the road.

Post-horses can only be furnished to travellers on producing a *padoroshna*, or order, which it is necessary to obtain at a police-office before starting, and in which is inserted the place to which one is going, the distance in versts, and the number of horses which one requires.

For the *padoroshna* the traveller pays at the rate of two kopeks per horse per verst, ten kopeks being equivalent to a penny. This duty serves to maintain the roads.

The fare for each post-horse is eight kopeks between Petersburg and Moscow, and five kopeks on most other roads, per verst.

To travel post in Russia, a person must either be provided with his own carriage, or content himself with a *tilèga*, a small waggon without springs. In these the letters are conveyed by the Post-Office, and the *feldt-yägers*, or imperial couriers, travel in the same manner. The *feldt-yägers* are a class of officers set apart for this employment, and numbers of them are at all times traversing the empire in every direction, on various errands. The fatigues which they endure are so severe and injurious to the health, that they seldom last in this service above six years, dying in general of consumption.

The pace which the *feldt-yägers* are forced to travel, in waggons without springs and over the roughest roads, is from twelve to fifteen miles an hour; and this, day and night, for long distances, without any repose. They pay for the horses at every station, but they are not delayed many minutes, as every postmaster is obliged to have a *tilèga* and three horses standing at all times ready in his yard, in case a courier should arrive, and, the moment it goes out, another takes its place. The courier has only to show his *padoroshna*, and the *tilèga* is driven out for him directly, the time at which he reaches and leaves each station being marked by the postmaster on the *padoroshna*. The *feldt-yägers* travel sometimes from Moscow to Petersburg, a distance of more than five hundred and twenty miles, in less than five and-thirty hours.

## LETTER VIII.

Journey to Moscow — Bad roads — River Medveditsa — Origin of its name — Arrival at Moscow — The Kremlin — Condition of the city — Ivan Veliki — The imperial palace — Ancient apartments of the Russian princesses — The great bell — The holy gate — The Exercise-house — Intention of proceeding southwards.

Moscow, October 10th, 1837.

WE arrived here late last Friday night, after a journey from Yaroslav which the state of the roads rendered extremely fatiguing and disagreeable. A new line of road is in progress, but is not yet completed, and the old road is in the mean time utterly neglected. We started on Thursday morning in a hard frost, which still continues, but which had been preceded by very heavy rain. During the wet weather the mud had become very deep, and had been much cut up by wheels, while it was now as hard as stone, and rougher than any ploughed field, so that in many places it was difficult to find a practicable track for the carriage. Occasionally the two wheels on one side would break through the crust of ice, and plunge into a hole so deep that I thought it impossible we could recover our equilibrium, and I hardly thought we could get here without being upset. However, no accident occurred, thanks to the skill and care of the *istvostchiks*, who now and then left the high road for several *versts* at a time, and drove us along mere tracks through fields and woods. In one of the latter, the path being somewhat narrow, a young birch-tree, of about the thickness of a man's leg, got caught between the wheel and the body of the carriage, and was brought to the ground with a crash; no harm, however, was done, though I was rather alarmed at first by the idea that the carriage itself, and not the tree, had suffered.

The road, on leaving Yaroslav, lay for nearly a mile along a *causeway*, twenty or thirty feet high, across a low flat. A

small river, called the Medveditza, flows here into the Volga ; and, until the causeway *was* made, all communication was cut off between ~~the~~ two sides, except by boats, at the period of ~~the~~ annual floods ; for when the snow melts and the ice breaks up, the rivers overflow to a great height, and cover the low ground. The Medveditza was so named by an ancient prince, in commemoration of his having killed a bear single-handed at the spot where it joins the Volga—*medved*, in Russian, signifying a bear. The arms of the province and town appear to commemorate the same event, since they consist of a bear carrying a battle-axe. Between Yaroslav and Moscow the country is much finer than any part of Russia I have yet seen.

About a hundred versts hence we passed a wood of tolerably large oak-trees, being the most northerly point at which we have seen the oak. We reached a town called Periaslav about half-past nine at night ; and as we could not travel in the dark, in consequence of the state of the road, we remained there till daylight, sleeping upon a sofa and some chairs, and wrapped up in our cloaks ; for, although we got a warm and clean room in the inn, beds were a luxury not to be met with, most Russian travellers carrying their own with them.

We were in the carriage again by five o'clock the next morning ; but, from the state of the road, we did not reach the gates of Moscow till half-past twelve at night. Here my passport was shown, and we were immediately admitted, and found ourselves, with no small degree of satisfaction, traversing the streets of the ancient city, which were dimly lighted and empty, and through which we drove for more than an hour before we reached our journey's end. We are lodged in my father-in-law's house, which is empty and dismantled, the family being in the country ; however, we make ourselves tolerably comfortable during our short stay, and we spend, as you may suppose, most of our time out of doors.

M— has fortunately a married sister living here, who, with her husband, has been very kind in going about with us to see the sights, and to act as interpreter.

The first step to take on the morning after our arrival was to engage a carriage ; and we have a very neat and comfortable



chariot with four horses, for about thirteen shillings a-day. It arrives at whatever time we order it in the morning, and it remains at our disposal till we come home, as late as we please at night; standing, whenever we are not using it, in the court-yard. The horses are fed when necessary with nose-bags; but they never enter a stable, and are never taken off the carriage all day.

We went first to visit the relations whom I have mentioned, who live at some distance on the further side of the river Moskva. I was not aware that we should pass near the Kremlin on our way, and the view of it, which burst upon us unexpectedly on reaching the bridge, was by far the most striking thing of the kind I ever saw. The Kremlin stands in the middle of the city, on an elevation, the base of which is circled by white Tartar walls, and is washed on one side by the river. The mount itself is covered by most picturesque buildings of various forms; churches, arsenals, palaces, and towers; while upwards of thirty gilt cupolas of various sizes, and at various heights, shoot up, and stand in relief against the sky. The whole scene has an oriental appearance, which, on my first introduction to it, was not a little enhanced in beauty by the clear blue sky, and by the bright hue which shone on the river and on the gilded roofs.

The following day being Sunday we attended service in the English church, which is plain but neatly fitted up. The congregation was small and scanty; however, the attendance is, no doubt, better in winter when the town is full. In the afternoon we went to dine with an aunt of M—'s, who lived at the extreme end of the town, so that the drive served to give me a very fair idea of the extent of Moscow. It was, in fact, a complete journey to the lady's house, which, though within the gates, was almost a country residence, since there were three or four acres of land attached to it. On the outskirts of the city may still be seen a few ruined houses, which have never been rebuilt since the French invasion. In general, however, Moscow at the present day exhibits no signs of the devastation which then took place, though the scattered manner in which it is built, and the number of fine houses, which are *no longer* inhabited or kept up by their possessors, give a

certain air of desertion to the town, and impress one with the feeling that its glory is departed. The ancient glory of Moscow has, indeed, taken wings for Petersburg; but it is said that, although yearly more and more deserted by the courtly and fashionable, it is gradually rising into increased prosperity as a commercial and manufacturing capital.

We have driven in various directions about the streets; have visited the boulevards, which are numerous, and much handsomer than anything of the kind at Petersburg; and have made a few purchases in the fashionable shops of the *Blacksmiths' Bridge*, as the Regent-street of Moscow is somewhat uncouthly named. Our chief attention, however, as you may suppose, has been devoted to the Kremlin. The view from the terrace in front of the imperial palace is most beautiful and striking; the river, which though small greatly enhances the scene, flowing immediately beneath, and the city lying stretched out under the gazer's feet. On the highest spot of ground in the Kremlin stands a lofty slender tower, which rises high above any other point in the city. This pillar-like edifice is called Ivan Veliki, or Long John; and from its top, to which we ascended by a time-worn winding stair, we had a most magnificent panoramic view of Moscow, and of the country around for many miles on every side. The sky was cloudless, the keen frosty air was bright and clear, and there was no smoke to obstruct the view, which I believe to be unequalled in its way. I need not describe the arsenal, which contains arms for a hundred and forty thousand foot-soldiers, and for eighty thousand cavalry, all apparently arranged in excellent order; nor the cannon, some of enormous size, which have at different periods been taken in action, and which are arranged in the square outside the arsenal.

The imperial palace contains a fine room, of singular form, richly decorated, and hung with crimson velvet, studded with the imperial eagle, and with the cipher of Nicholas I., in gold. There is a throne in the room; and here the Emperor receives the congratulations of his subjects and of the foreign ambassadors immediately after his coronation, which takes place in the cathedral church, a small ancient building close by. A small set of apartments, which in former days formed

at once the abode and the prison of the grand-duchesses for the time being, is curious, as showing how the Russian princesses were then lodged. These apartments consist of three or four small rooms, the windows of which are formed of small panes of coloured glass, affording no view but that of an old church opposite. The furniture is rich, but scanty and comfortless; for though the apartments have been recently fresh painted and re-gilt, the old ornaments and decorations are merely restored without any alteration or addition. In this small and cheerless dwelling were the daughters of the Czar, whether few or many, brought up and immured in ancient times, never being allowed to go forth until the day of their marriage.

The remainder of the palace is in no way remarkable, either as curious or splendid; but the prospect from the windows is magnificent, standing as the palace does on the elevated ground of the Kremlin, and raised above the town; and perhaps no sovereign in Europe has so fine a site as this for a residence in his capital. A new and magnificent palace has been determined on, and its erection will, I am told, be shortly commenced. I must not forget the "great bell of Moscow," which can now be seen to much advantage. It was cast in the year 1733; but, soon after it was hung, it fell and buried itself in the ground. In this state it remained until the year 1836, when, by orders of the Emperor, it was with some difficulty raised, and placed upon a circular wall about four feet high, on which it now stands. An iron gate in the wall enables one to see the interior of the bell, the diameter of which within is about fourteen feet, its weight being upwards of a hundred and eighty tons. A piece, which is now placed by its side, was broken out of the bell in its fall; and this fracture enables one to see the thickness of the metal, which is about half a yard.

There is a bell now hanging in the Kremlin which weighs between ninety and a hundred tons, and which is rung twelve times a year. It takes three men to move the clapper for the purpose, the bell itself, as is always the case in Russia, being fixed, and the clapper alone moveable. There is probably no country *in the world* where there are so many fine bells, or where

there is so much ringing, as in this ; but the Russians have no idea of a merry or harmonious peal, and their style of ringing is most discordant.

One of the gates of the Kremlin is called the Holy Gate, and while passing through it is necessary to take off the hat. Near to this gate is a circular stone platform, surrounded by a low parapet, where criminals were formerly executed.

The most ancient portion of Moscow is called the White City, and is surrounded by a wall, at one of the gates of which is placed a celebrated image of the Virgin, covered with diamonds and other jewels of great value. This image, which is endowed according to popular belief with miraculous virtues, is often carried to sick persons in their houses, and there is a copy with paste diamonds and false jewels, which does duty at home during the absence of the original, and which is found, we may presume, to be equally efficacious.

Near the Holy Gate of the Kremlin stands the church of St. Basil, an ancient building, remarkable not only for the singularity of its architecture and its spiral ornaments, but also for the fate of the architect, whose eyes were put out, as soon as he had completed the work, by his master, John the Cruel, in order that he might never build anything else like it.

One of the most remarkable modern buildings in Moscow is the Exercise-house, a magnificent room, in which troops of all arms are drilled and manœuvred in winter. Eight thousand men can, I am told, be exercised in it at once. The floor is covered with fine gravel, and the room is effectually warmed by means of stoves at the corners and sides. Its dimensions are about five hundred and sixty feet by a hundred and forty-five, with a proportionable height, and the roof is ingeniously supported without the aid of pillars. I was not so much struck by the immense size of this gigantic room on first entering, as when afterwards, on casting my eyes around, I saw here and there carts bringing in fresh gravel or water for laying the dust ; the perspective calling my attention to the enormous proportions of the building.

I should have observed that, when we visited the palace, the servants who showed us over it refused to take any

money for their trouble, alleging that they were strictly forbidden to do so.\*

To-morrow we start for Tamboff, about three hundred and eighty miles to the south, where, as you know, we intend to pass the winter with M—'s eldest brother. He has sent his carriage for us, with two servants well accustomed to travelling, whom we shall doubtless find highly useful upon the road. On a long Russian journey two servants are very desirable, one to relieve the other, or, on arriving at a station, one to busy himself in getting fresh horses, while the other is in attendance on the travellers.

Our passport is in due order, our *padoroshna* is procured, and the weather promises to be extremely favourable: a matter of no small importance, as I am told that after heavy rains the road we have to traverse is almost impassable in some places from the depth of mud. There are large tracts of land near Tamboff in which not a stone is to be found, and where no materials therefore for roads can be procured. I shall write again soon after we get to our journey's end; and as we shall after this remain stationary for some time, I shall probably take the opportunity now and then of sending you some general accounts of the country and the people, in default of any adventures of our own.

\* Like the Royal servants at Windsor Castle.

## LETTER IX.

Russian autumn — Journey from Moscow to Tamboff — Accident on the road — Eclipse of the moon — A coach and nine — Character of the country near Tamboff — Game — Georgian horses.

Rascazava, near Tamboff, October 27th, 1837.

ACCORDING to the calendar it is still but autumn, and even here we are now enjoying mild weather, yet I confess I felt much inclined a short time ago to believe it was winter, though I found it by no means disagreeable. While we were at Moscow we had ten degrees of frost by Reaumur, and since we came here we have had some days almost equally cold. This temperature was, however, generally compensated by a bright sun, and I was in no way disposed to complain of the season. The Russians will never allow that winter has begun, however cold it may be, until the snow has fallen and sledging has commenced.

We left Moscow, according to our intentions, on Wednesday, the 11th of this month, in the afternoon, and, travelling day and night without stopping, we arrived at this house on the Saturday at the same hour, having been exactly three days on the road. Here M— and I met with a most warm reception from her brother\* and his wife, who are exceedingly kind, and with whom we spend our time most comfortably and pleasantly. In the course of the first stage from Moscow we met with an accident which at first looked rather formidable, though in the end no one was hurt, and we were soon enabled to proceed.

The road had been for some time sandy and heavy, so that we had gone at a gentle pace, till in a long straggling village, about twelve miles from Moscow, we suddenly increased our speed, and presently found ourselves driving along

\* While this edition is preparing for the press, the painful intelligence of his death has reached us.

at full gallop. We had not, however, proceeded far at this pace before the carriage was stopped with a jerk, and we at the same time heard a violent cracking of wood. The door of the carriage was instantly opened, and when we got out we beheld a very curious scene. On one side was a tilèga half upset, with a man and a woman thrown out of it into a ditch, but happily unhurt. The horses which drew it were struggling violently, being entangled in their harness. Our six post-horses, moreover, were lying on the ground in a heap. The near wheeler (of four) was struggling with his hind quarters under the carriage, between the fore and the hind wheels; another of the wheelers was on his back, with his heels up in the air, and fast in the rope-traces. The two others were in different positions, and the leaders, strange to say, were undermost, with their heads turned the contrary way to that in which we were going. The postilion's horse was lying stretched on his side unable to move, with his head and shoulders under the fore-axle, and his companion was in nearly the same position. The pole was snapped across in the middle. The peasant in the tilèga was drunk, and had caused this accident by driving against us or our horses. The shock, which, as we were going at full gallop, was very great, threw down the leaders; the wheelers then fell over them, the horses all getting entangled in the rope harness; and the carriage was stopped by running on the horses. How the leaders in falling got their heads turned round where their tails had been I cannot explain, but such was the fact.

Our first inquiries naturally were as to the fate of the postilion, and we had the great satisfaction of finding that, though he must have fallen with his horse, he had contrived to roll himself immediately out of the way, and had escaped completely unhurt. If he had not got clear of the other horses and of the carriage, he must inevitably have been crushed to death; and his escape was most wonderful.

At the first appearance of affairs, I thought that some of the horses must be disabled, and that our broken pole would at any rate be the cause of a long delay. However, a number of people assembled, and, without cutting a single rope or strap, *they succeeded* in about half an hour in releasing all the

horses; none of which, when we saw them on their legs, appeared to be seriously hurt, although the road, on which they had fallen, must have been tolerably hard from the frost, which had now lasted more than a week.

The next consideration was the broken pole; but with the handiness and ready contrivance which seem innate to this people, our Russian attendant proceeded to splice the two pieces together with a rope and a piece of wood. The operation did not last five minutes, but the repair was so well and effectually done, that the pole, which was never meddled with again till we reached our journey's end, was then as firm as ever; and we might have travelled with it in that state back again to Moscow.

In about three quarters of an hour from the moment of the stoppage we were enabled to proceed, and we met with no further adventures in the course of the journey. Early the following morning we reached the town of Columna, about eighty miles from Moscow; and passing through one or two small towns in the course of the day, we got to Riazan, a considerable place and the capital of a government, by seven in the evening. We proceeded, as I have already said, without resting; and on the Friday night we drank tea at Kazloff, reaching the town of Tamboff, about three-and-twenty miles hence, to breakfast the following morning. The road most part of the way was tolerable, as the weather was dry. It was in general enormously wide, and being unstoned it resembled a rough ploughed field, through which the narrow beaten track meandered like a footpath.

The country was but little wooded after the first half of our journey, and from Kazloff to Tamboff, a distance of fifty miles, it was entirely open, and in fact a steppe.

The moon, the night that we traversed this district, was at the full, but about eleven o'clock it began, to our great surprise, to fail us, and at length the darkness became so great that our yemstchik stopped, declaring that he could not see his horses, much less the road, which is at all times very easily lost in these unenclosed plains. With some lucifer-matches which we had in the carriage we lighted one of the lamps, the other being useless, owing to a broken glass; and the servant



on the box was obliged to hold the light in his hand, and occasionally to walk with it before the horses ; by which means we managed to creep along at a foot's pace till about two o'clock in the morning, when the moon began to re-appear.

Two or three days ago I was looking at an almanac, and I perceived that, although on this occasion we had selected the period of a full moon for our journey, we had unwittingly fallen on the night of a total eclipse. In travelling over Russian roads, moonshine becomes a matter of considerable importance.

On reaching the town of Tamboff I was told that the road to this place was so heavy, that it would be necessary to put extra horses to the carriage. Accordingly, when we got into the vehicle again, we found no less than nine horses tackled to it—six wheelers abreast, driven from the box, and three leaders with a postilion mounted in the middle. This drove of animals, however, we found by no means superfluous, for a great part of the road lay through a heavy sand, so deep that the horses sunk in it to the fetlocks, and the felloes of the wheels were covered.

The general character of this part of the country is open plain or steppe, unclothed by trees. Immediately around this spot, however, are very extensive woods of oak and Scotch fir. The former is mere copse and brushwood, but much of the fir timber is large and fine. The soil, where not covered by sand, consists in general of a rich deep black mould, entirely free from stone, and producing heavy crops without manure.\* In addition to the usual produce of Russia, large quantities of a particular kind of cucumber, to be salted for winter use, are grown in the fields in this district.

The neighbouring woods abound in hares and foxes, and in blackcock. They are also much infested by wolves. Snipes and woodcocks, and the double-snipe, are plentiful earlier in the year ; but they have now taken flight for the winter. The cock-of-the woods, or capercaillie, is not very rare, and a few days ago we surprised an eagle eating a hare. The open

\* In Tamboff I afterwards saw the manure of the town brought down to the river in the course of the winter and piled on the ice, to be carried away by the spring floods. It was in fact regarded as a nuisance to be got rid of.

plains supply gelinottes and red-legged partridges; so that there is no lack of game. Rabbits, I believe, are not to be found in Russia, and I have never seen a donkey.

We are to spend the winter in the town of Tamboff, to which place we are going shortly for a few days to see a large fair of horses and goods of every kind, which is held annually at this season. A country fair in this central province—for we are nearly equidistant from Petersburg, Odessa, and Astrakan, the Baltic, the Black Sea, and the Caspian—can hardly fail to present some new and interesting pictures of Russian character and Russian life. I am much pleased with the opportunity thus offered to me, and when we return you shall have some description of what we have seen. My brother-in-law will have business as well as pleasure to occupy him at the fair, for since our arrival he has received a consignment of nine thorough-bred horses from an aunt of his wife, a Princess Madatoff, who has a breeding stud on her estate in Georgia, near the Araxes. One of these horses is intended as a present to my brother-in-law, and two others are for a nephew of the proprietress, while the remaining six are to be sold at the fair. At present, therefore, we have seven at our disposal, and we amuse ourselves by exercising some of them daily. Most of these are hot showy horses, and they all have imposing pedigrees, the translation of which commences, as you will anticipate, with "In the name of the Prophet." The estate from which these horses come is close to the frontier of Persia. They are accustomed, when turned out to graze, to be picketed by one hind foot to a stake, which is moved when necessary. The person in whose charge they have been sent gives a wonderful account of the luxuriance of the grass in his country, which he says is abundantly irrigated in summer by the melting of the snow on their lofty mountains, up the sides of which, as the heat increases, they, like the Swiss herdsmen, gradually move their animals to higher elevations to graze. You will think that we are living in a semi-Asiatic family; but my brother-in-law and his wife speak excellent English, and their relative, Princess Madatoff, is a very good Christian, and no doubt an accomplished lady of European tastes and habits, though she resides among a Mahometan population in Asia.

## LETTER X.

Fair at Tamboff — Fire-engines to assist the police — Tartar purchasers of horse-flesh — Don Cossacks — Mode of backing a colt — Trotting-matches — Town of Tamboff — Hall of assembly — Constitution of the assembly of the nobles — Office of Marshal of the nobility — Mode of transacting business — Functions of the assembly — Accident to the Emperor near Tiflis — His proceedings in Georgia — Anecdote of the Grand-Duchess Marie.

Rascazava, November 10th, 1837.

WE returned into the country, a few days ago, from Tamboff, where we spent a week, to see the fair of which I made mention in my last letter, and which was instituted, it seems, in commemoration of the finding of an image of the Virgin, which is now at Veronish, and which, like the Palladium, was sent down from heaven, and at length discovered, after having been hid for many years on earth.

The fair is not held in the town for fear of fire, but on an extensive steppe or down, about three quarters of a mile off.

On this down a perfect village was erected of wooden booths, in which shops were opened for the sale of all kinds of goods, especially every article necessary for winter clothing, which was at the time exceedingly attractive, as we had a hard frost during the whole week. There were several fur-shops, very handsomely provided with skins of all kinds, and of all prices; bear, fox, sable, beaver, wolf, and a variety of others, of which I do not know the names. Russians sometimes go to an enormous expense in fur; but a handsome fox-skin for a lady's cloak may be had for about eight pounds; and a beaver collar, which is the handsomest and most agreeable fur for the purpose, for a lady or gentleman, will cost from eight to twelve pounds. A bear-skin pelisse, which is only fit for wearing in a sledge or in travelling, costs about thirty pounds. There were also Tartar merchants, with shaven heads and skull-caps, who sold shawls, dressing-gowns, slippers, and all kinds of *eastern manufactures*; while close by them were drapers, silk-

merciers, and all the tradesmen requisite to furnish a lady's toilette, with goods home-made or imported from England or France. The shopkeepers were all wrapped up in furs, for the booths were bitterly cold.

Who would expect, at a country fair, to find church-bells for sale! There were a number of all sizes, some being of a very considerable weight of metal. They were hung on wooden frames in an open space, so that a customer could easily ring them to judge of their tones. I was told that there was always a certain demand for these bells at the fair.

A number of fire-engines were stationed round the booths, to be useful not only in the event of fire, but as assistants to the police in keeping order; since, in case of a mob of drunken and disorderly people assembling at night, an engine playing into the midst of them speedily disperses the crowd.

The horse-fair altogether presented a most curious scene. A large space of the steppe was thickly covered with tilègas, or little waggons, behind which the horses for sale were tied; and the strange figures of the people in their sheepskin coats and fur caps, with their long beards, had anything but an European character. In one part of the fair were to be seen showy horses, covered with gaudy cloths in bright colours, and tied three or four together behind tilègas, where from time to time they created a disturbance by kicking and fighting with their companions or neighbours. Among these were our six eastern steeds, destined by their owner to procure for herself a plentiful harvest of roubles, and to become sires of renown in the breeding studs of Tamboff. The former expectation, at least, will have been much disappointed, for unfortunately such horses were not now in demand. In another quarter were Tartars bargaining for miserable worn-out animals, such as in England may be seen awaiting their time in the paddock adjoining a kennel; but which the Tartar purchases as food, not for his dogs but for himself; horse-flesh being the principal fare of these Russian Mahometans, who are tolerably numerous in this neighbourhood.

In another part of the fair, again, were dealers from the Don, with large lots of Cossack and Bashkir horses. The Cossack horse is small, raw-boned, and spare, carrying little

flesh, and apparently not equal to any great weight ; but he is far better than he looks, and is hardy, active, and enduring : he is little used for harness, his master being a horseman bred and born. The Bashkir horse is short and punchy, with a thick neck and a dull heavy head ; but he will travel seventy miles without stopping or tiring. The Cossack and Bashkir horses at the fair were chiefly wild unbroken colts, and they were not haltered like the rest, or tied behind tilegas, but enclosed twenty or thirty together, in pens surrounded by a strong railing. In each pen was a lad with a whip, who kept the horses moving slowly round and round.

It was amusing to watch the process of showing these colts to purchasers. When a customer fixed his eye on one of them, and wished to examine him and see his action, the dealer, with the help of a long stick, threw a noose over the horse's head, and pulled it tight round his throat. The bar which closed the pen was then let down, and the lad inside, keeping the other horses away from the opening, drove out the one which had been selected. He, of course, finding himself apparently free on the open plain, immediately tried to run away ; but his escape was not to be effected, for his owner had a firm hand on the rope round his neck, and a vigorous pull tightened the noose so as almost to strangle the horse. The assistant, having now closed the pen, came to his master's aid ; and having forced a bridle on the head of the poor frightened brute, boldly jumped on his back. The colt naturally resented the aggression by rearing, kicking, plunging, and doing all in his power to rid himself of his unceremonious rider. The Cossack, however, held fast by the mane, clung tightly with his legs, and kept a firm seat. Presently he urged on the horse, his master still holding the rope round the animal's neck. After a minute or two the colt became more tranquil ; the end of the rope was given to the rider, and he was left to take care of himself. He immediately set off at full gallop across the steppe, and returned after a while at the same pace, pulling up with some difficulty when he reached the spot from which he had started.

This process, which I saw followed with two or three horses, reminded me of the account given by Sir Francis

Head, in his 'Journey across the Pampas,' of the manner of breaking in wild horses in South America.

The Cossack dealers had their own riding-horses, saddled and bridled, tied to the railings of the pens, and every now and then a couple of them would mount, and, starting off at full gallop, have a wild race against one another across the steppe. The ground was hard and slippery from the frost, but these fellows appeared to fear neither for themselves nor their horses, though one of them, who was neither young nor light, met with rather an awkward tumble; however, he appeared to care nothing for it. He was coming at full speed down hill, and, not having pulled up in time, he was obliged to turn on one side to avoid the crowd; and in so doing his horse slipped and fell flat on his side. I expected the rider to be considerably hurt, but he was instantly on his legs, urged up his horse, mounted, and set off again at full gallop across the plain. The Cossacks, who appear to be the only Russians much given to horsemanship, ride with snaffle bridles and upon a peaked saddle, with a leather cushion girthed upon it, so that they sit very high. They have a very peculiar seat, riding rather on one side, looking to the right, with the right toe and knee pointing out, and the left pressed closely to the horse. They wear no spurs, but carry a whip of pig-skin, looking like a small flail, in their hands.

Adjoining the space which was occupied by the horse-fair is a race-course for trotting-matches, which are greatly in vogue in Russia at present. Great attention is paid, especially in this part of the country, to breeding fast trotters, which often command very high prices. They are many of them as large and handsome as London cabriolet horses. We saw some of these horses in training every evening on the race-course. They are driven in light droschkas; the vehicle being simply a board about four or five feet long, covered with a cushion, and placed on four low wheels. On this bench the driver sits astride, with his feet resting on iron bars, which project on either side for this purpose. When a trotter is in training, a boy on another horse generally gallops by his side to excite him; and the art of driving them is as carefully studied as jockeyship is in England. In winter a place is marked out

with branches of trees on the ice for trotting-matches, and a light sledge is used instead of a droschka.

I have not much to say in praise of the beauty of Tamboff as a town. From the scarcity of stone, it consists chiefly of wooden houses, and only one or two of the principal streets are paved. In the others the mud in wet weather is ploughed with ruts axle-deep; and frost having now succeeded rain, and these roads having become as hard as stone, they are in a condition to endanger breaking the wheels of the carriages and the legs of the horses.

Like all government towns in Russia, Tamboff boasts an Archbishop and a Monastery. There is also a Nunnery there, and a certain number of churches, but none of them are remarkable. The government house has a most dismal appearance; and the only building in the place of any pretension is the Hall of Assembly of the nobles. This edifice contains a fine room, with a gallery running round three sides, supported on Corinthian pillars. At the upper end is a marvellously bad portrait of the Emperor under a canopy. His Majesty's portrait is usually placed in all public rooms, the pictures being for the most part unvarying copies of one original. The Emperor is depicted in uniform, with leather breeches and jack-boots; and he looks sternly over a green and blue landscape to the right, his cocked-hat being in his right hand, and his left thumb stuck into his sash, apparently to relieve him from its exceeding pressure.

The nobles, that is to say the gentlemen, of every Government in Russia form an Assembly, in which every one who owns within the province a hundred peasants is entitled to vote. They meet once in three years to elect a *Marshal* for each district, of which there are twelve in every province, and a *Grand-Marshal* for the whole Government. The latter stands next in rank to the governor. He has the title of Excellency and the grade of General while he remains in office, and, if he is elected three several times, he retains his rank for life. After being elected, he must be confirmed in his office by the Emperor before he can enter on his functions. These Marshals represent the nobles, and they meet from time to time for the transaction of business; but the General Assembly of nobles

cannot meet oftener than triennially, except by an extraordinary permission from the Emperor. The business of the Assembly relates chiefly to the management and disposal of funds raised by a voluntary rate among themselves for the establishment and maintenance of public institutions, such as schools, hospitals, &c. The wardship of minors, of lunatics, and even of spendthrifts among their own number, is vested in the hands of the nobles, the business being practically conducted by their representatives the Marshals. Moreover, if a noble is injuring his children by wasting his estate, the Assembly have the power, which is not unfrequently exercised, of taking the management of his property into their own hands for the benefit of his family, and of putting him upon an allowance.

At the meeting of the Assembly, thirteen tables are placed in the great hall, one for the Grand-Marshal of the government, and one for the nobles of each district, with their Marshal as their chairman. A government in Russia may be considered as a county, and the districts into which it is divided as corresponding to our English hundreds. When the Grand-Marshal proposes a question, he assembles the twelve Marshals at his own table, and addresses himself to them. Each of them then goes to the table of his district and puts the question, after it has been discussed, to the vote. Having thus ascertained the decision of the majority of his constituents, he returns to the Grand-Marshal's table and gives his voice accordingly, the question being thus finally decided by the majority of districts.

Any member of the Assembly may propose a question. In this case, it is first discussed and put to the vote at the table to which the proposer belongs. If it be rejected there, it is of course at once lost; but if it be carried, the Marshal of the district reports it to the Grand-Marshal, who puts it to the vote of the meeting in the manner described above.

In this way the nobles assess themselves voluntarily for various purposes of public utility according to the number of peasants possessed by each. Their vote receives the ratification of the Emperor, and it is then binding on all; and payment of the contributions, though originally voluntary, can be legally enforced.



The election of the Marshals is by ballot. In case of the Grand-Marshal being ill, or from any other cause incapacitated from attending to his duties, the Marshal of the district in which the government town is situated supplies his place *ad interim*. The functions of the Assembly are very narrowly limited, and the discussion in it of political questions is altogether prohibited. Its existence, nevertheless, may possibly hereafter prove the germ of freer institutions. Its powers may be developed, and the habit thus acquired of electing representatives and of discussing public questions may be extended to the purposes of legislation and government.

We have just received accounts of the Emperor having been in great danger from the overturning of his carriage, near Tifflis, in Georgia. Considering the pace at which he insists upon being driven, and the roads over which he travels, it is surprising he does not more frequently meet with accidents. Nor is this the first which has befallen him. Two years ago he was overturned, and broke his collar-bone. Indeed he is very generally blamed for the manner in which in his frequent journeys he risks his life, considering how valuable that life is to the preservation of internal peace and tranquillity in Russia. No one can foresee the result should any unfortunate accident place his successor, while as yet young and inexperienced, on the imperial throne; but Nicholas himself has a character and a prestige which smothers rebellion, and at least silences disaffection.

The accident which has just occurred happened as follows. At Tifflis, the master of police put the horses belonging to the fire-engines to the Emperor's carriage. These, being high-couraged animals, unlike the ordinary post-horses, were not easy to manage; and, unfortunately, an *istvostchik* who was not used to the horses was put on the box, in place of the man who usually had the charge of them, but whom it was contrary to certain regulations to employ on this occasion because he was a soldier.

In descending a steep mountain by a zigzag road overhanging a precipice, the wheel not having been locked, the horses refused to hold, and broke into a gallop; and at length, *at a corner*, the leaders, instead of taking the proper turn,

jumped over the low parapet, against which the calèche was dashed and was upset with violence, the front part of it being knocked to pieces. The Cossack soldiers who were escorting the Emperor immediately cut the traces, and the leaders fell down the precipice, the postilion fortunately escaping uninjured. Count Orloff, the Imperial aide-de-camp, was thrown out of the carriage, and had his shoulder dislocated. The Emperor fell over him, and was received in the arms of the officer of Cossacks, to whom, seeing he was much alarmed, he said, "Don't be frightened, I am not hurt." He then shook himself to ascertain the fact, crossed himself, and thanked God for having preserved him, and presently mounted a horse, and rode fifteen miles to the next station, where he got another carriage, and proceeded on his journey. He travels at the rate of from fifteen to eighteen miles an hour, being preceded by an avant-courier, so that he finds horses always waiting, and the time which he allows for changing is but two minutes. It is said that the Emperor went into Georgia on the present occasion for the especial purpose of rectifying certain abuses and acts of tyranny which had been reported to him. The result of his visit was, that justice was done, and the delinquent officers were punished. Among others the colonel of a regiment and son-in-law to the Governor of Tifflis was convicted of numerous acts of cruelty and malversation. The Emperor ordered his epaulettes to be stripped off; and seeing that every one hesitated to obey his orders, he tore them off with his own hands, and then he presented them, as a symbol of promotion, to the governor's son, expressing a hope that the new colonel would do them credit. That the sovereign should thus with his own hand execute his own sentence is not quite in accordance with our ideas of dignity; but in Russian eyes such an act would doubtless tell; and we hear that the Emperor has acquired much popularity in Georgia by his prompt but just severity.

He has incurred perils by sea as well as by land during this autumn; for in one of his late excursions on the Black Sea, his steam-vessel was nearly driven on shore, and was in considerable danger in a storm. On landing, his Majesty was received by the Empress and his family; but he had hardly

stepped on shore before a girl in Tartar attire pressed forward, and, kneeling down, presented a petition to the Emperor. He was very angry at the intrusion, and bade the girl begone, and not interrupt him at the moment of his restoration to his wife and children. She lingered, however, and said, " But, Sire, the Tartars too are your children." Nicholas then looked at her more attentively, and saw that the petitioner was no other than his own daughter, the Grand Duchess Mary, who is said to be his favourite child.\*

\* A portrait of the Grand Duchess, in the Tartar costume, was afterwards painted and presented by her to her father on his name-day.

## LETTER XI.

Country life in Russia — Scarcity of books — Want of country amusements — Want of independence — Law of inheritance — Relative position of master and serf — Description of a country place — Furniture and interior arrangements — Nature of property — Management of peasants — Their characters and habits — Fasts — Manufactories established by landed proprietors — Versatility of the Russians — Apprenticing children — Household industry — Domestic discipline — Anecdote.

Rascazava, November 14th, 1837.

As we are now leading a life not very fertile in incidents, I may perhaps interest you by a few remarks and observations on the social habits and character of the Russians, and on the relative positions of various ranks and classes, beginning with the nobles or landed gentry.

Few Russians of this class spend the winter in the country if they can avoid it, for to be there when the ground is covered with snow, and all out-door occupations and amusements fail, implies absolute banishment from the civilized world; for society, which then becomes doubly requisite, becomes at the same time unattainable. To some the want of this enjoyment may perhaps be supplied by books, but in general the Russians are not a literary people, and those who have a taste for reading have but scanty means of gratifying it, especially at a distance from Petersburg. Russian literature is, I am assured, daily improving; but still it is admitted on all hands that those whose reading is limited to this language must be contented with a very moderate amount of general information. Although, however, this defect is in a great measure remedied by the universal knowledge of French possessed by the upper classes, added to a very general acquaintance with the German, and even to a certain extent with the English language, yet books are dear; and there are none of the arrangements which in England bring them more or less within the reach of all who are sufficiently educated to profit by them.

The censorship, moreover, presses with a dead weight upon literature, by the number of publications which it prohibits or mutilates; many of which are those which would tend most to open the minds of the people, but which the government for that very reason excludes. Newspapers, though they are not numerous, are indeed to be seen in every house; but all political speculations, all remarks on acts of the government, all discussions as to the qualifications of public officers, or as to the results and tendencies of public events, are rigidly prohibited; while a great deal of information as to what is actually passing in the world is carefully suppressed. These journals, herefore, contain little beyond a meagre summary of scanty news; a notification of officers who have received decorations, promotions, or appointments; an imperial *ukase* or ordinance; and an account of the movements of the Emperor or Empress.

It is not surprising, then, that a taste for reading should, in ordinary cases, be checked, since the field of literature is so much confined, and since a large class of subjects, including those of most general and exciting interest, are carefully excluded from discussion.

However, without dwelling further on this subject, solitude must have more than her ordinary charms to make any one voluntarily choose to spend in the country the long and dreary winter of this climate.

The Russian, therefore, considers his country-place merely as a summer residence, and even then he very commonly regards it as an absolute retirement, where he enjoys little society even among his neighbours, and into which a stranger can seldom be expected to penetrate. Town he looks upon as the scene of all pleasure and refinement, and he therefore takes comparatively few pains to render his country-house enjoyable or luxurious. He has no country amusements to tempt guests to his house, for few Russians have any taste for field-sports.

Neither has he any higher inducements to attach him to his estate. He has not many public duties to perform, he possesses little influence beyond his absolute authority over his serfs, and he feels little pride in his inheritance. The Russian has in truth no independent position of his own, being almost entirely *what it pleases* the Emperor to make him.

The estate of the father must at his death be subdivided in certain fixed proportions among his children,\* so that it becomes useless to expend money in creating or embellishing a residence which the son, to whom it will hereafter belong, may not have the means of keeping up.

The consequence of this system, and of the indefinite multiplication of titles, is, that there is no independent hereditary aristocracy in Russia, no influence of property, and little respect or attachment to families in their own neighbourhood.

The inhabitants of the country consist solely of the owners of the soil and the serfs. The owner looks upon his estate, not with the pride and pleasure of an English gentleman, but simply as the source of a certain annual revenue; and his serfs know that, so long as he is their master, they must obey him and labour for him; while, if the estate passes into other hands, they must do the same to-morrow for their new lord. Where there is slavery on one side and absolute power on the other, voluntary and sincere attachment on the part of the inferior, if it ever be found, must be regarded as an exception to a general rule.

Among those of the same class, the question in Russia is, not who a man may be by birth, talent, or merit, but what the Emperor may have made him; whether his epaulettes be those of a General or of a Subaltern.

The handsome, substantial country-seat of the English landowner, with its park or well-wooded lawn, is little known in Russia. The utmost that is usually attempted is a pretty villa with no ornamental ground beyond the garden; which is merely divided by a fence from a high road, a dirty village street, or an open plain. The garden itself is generally large in proportion to the place, but it is indifferently kept, and it has a natural deficiency, very striking to English eyes, in the total absence of evergreens, and of the less hardy plants and trees; excepting those which are kept under glass in the winter.

\* The law apports one-seventh of a man's landed property to his widow for ever, one-fourteenth to each daughter, and the remainder in equal portions among his sons. Every one is, therefore, but a life-tenant on his estate; yet such is the inconsistency of the law, that he may waste it or cut down timber, as he pleases; or he may sell the land and dispose of the purchase-money as he chooses, either in his lifetime or by will.

For the interior arrangement of the houses, the custom is to have as many rooms as possible, opening *en suite*. If the reception-rooms are on the first floor, the ground tier is low and reserved for servants' rooms, offices, &c. The kitchen is generally in a detached building.

The bed-room of the master and mistress of the house is usually connected with the drawing-room or saloon by folding-doors, which stand open all day, so that any one who pleases may enter.\* Sometimes a folding screen runs across the room, so as to conceal the bed, which, however, when the lady has a separate dressing-room, is often exposed to view, unencumbered with hangings, but covered by a handsome silk quilt: while the toilette-table displays the usual silver boxes and cut-glass bottles which belong to a handsome dressing-case.

Russian rooms in general boast by no means the same amount of comfort and the same luxury of furniture which is usual in England. The sofas are stiff and hard, and the chairs and tables heavy and clumsy, castors being seldom used. The walls, instead of being papered or painted, are in general merely whitewashed or coloured. The preposterous expense of really good furniture necessarily confines it to the houses, and chiefly to the town-houses, of a very few rich people. A Petersburg tradesman will doubtless fit up a house with the utmost luxury and with great good taste; but his charges, I am told, will be double those of a first-rate London upholsterer. Refinement cannot be considered as naturalised in any country till it can be indulged in at a reasonable price, so as to become habitual to the people at large.

To return to Russian rooms. The floors are generally bare, with the exception of a small carpet in one corner; but they are composed of inlaid wood, or of boards painted in imitation of such work.

Almost every apartment, without excepting the bed-rooms,

\* In the bed-room is always a little open cupboard, filled with images, or rather pictures, of saints, set in gold and silver frames; before which a lamp or two is kept burning. In the corner of every room in the house is hung an image. For this reason it is considered extremely disrespectful to keep on a hat for a moment on entering a house, or even a shop.

is a passage; an inconvenience to which Russians do not appear at all sensible. Since there are no bells, except one perhaps communicating from the saloon into the ante-room, the masters cannot, as in England, live in one part of the house while their servants live in another, to the mutual comfort of both parties; nor can the doors be always shut on everything that should lie behind the scenes. Here the footman must be close to the saloon, the valet must be within call of his master, and the maids must be next door to the bed-room of their mistress; each in general sleeping by night where he or she sat by day.

Having described the Russian gentleman's residence, we now come to the consideration of his property, which he reckons, not by the annual income of his estate, but by the number of *souls*, that is of *male* peasants, which it contains. The fair sex is never counted in the census. A Russian, instead of an estate worth so many thousand roubles a-year, talks of possessing so many hundred *souls*. This is the term commonly used in speaking of the peasants, and its restriction to the male sex is one of the many Russian customs which betray an Asiatic origin.

Early marriages are much encouraged among the serfs, as it is the great object of most landed proprietors to increase the population on their estates. The marriage of girls of all ranks under the age of sixteen years is now forbidden by law, and the punishment for such a marriage, even if the offence be not discovered for years after its commission, is the separation of the husband and wife, with the imprisonment of the latter in a convent for life.

The footing on which the agricultural serf practically stands towards his master is, in most respects, that of a small tenant; the principal difference being that he cannot change his employment or move from home without his master's leave, which however is sometimes obtained in consideration of a certain annual payment called *obrok*, in lieu of service.\* As a general rule, the serf has a house and a portion of land, for which he pays rent in labour instead of money. He works three

\* For this subject more at large, see 'Details of Russian Husbandry,' &c.



days in the week for his master, and has the remainder of his time at his own disposal. A day's labour of a man includes that of his wife and his horse when requisite.

The peasants are under the immediate authority of one of their own number elected by themselves, and called the *Starosta*, or Elder, of the village. This person acts as a bailiff, receiving the orders of the master or his steward, and superintending the people when at work, as well as maintaining order in the village.

These peasants, who are for the most part in a state of the grossest ignorance, are perfect predestinarians or fatalists; and this doctrine serves as an excuse on all occasions for their habitual improvidence and want of forethought. If a child dies from neglect, or a colt is destroyed by the wolves because it was left in the field at night, the peasant says it was the will of God. Sometimes he examines his colt's teeth, and cunningly judges by certain signs whether it is fated to become food for wolves. This investigation at once shifts all trouble and responsibility off his own shoulders; since, if the animal is born to be devoured, of course no precautions can avert its destiny; while, in the contrary case, they would be obviously superfluous.

The peasants are very strict in their observance of the severe fasts of the Greek church, which occupy more than half the year, including every Wednesday and Friday, and the eve of every feast. During these fasts they taste neither meat nor milk, butter, eggs, nor cheese, on some occasions even abstaining from the use of fish.

Among the upper classes these fasts are almost entirely neglected by the *gentlemen*, as not agreeing with their health. The *ladies* for the most part observe some of the fasts, which they regard as more sacred than the others; and some few of them scrupulously obey the rule of the church throughout. Among the domestic servants and the trading class the rule is, I believe, universally obeyed in its utmost rigour; but it is the poor peasant who chiefly feels the suffering and privation which it entails, since he has none of the luxurious substitutes for his ordinary diet which his richer neighbour enjoys.

After all, unenviable and degraded as is the lot of the *Russian serf*, he seems in general happy and contented, and he

exhibits little consciousness of oppression. His desires are few and easily satisfied. His fare is indeed coarse and poor, but he seldom suffers from cold or hunger; he has few anxieties, and he is naturally gay, good-humoured, and light-hearted. The nobles, however, choose their domestic servants from among their peasants, and here the case is totally different. The servants feel the pressure of their bondage in the caprice and ill-humour which they often have to endure, in the restraint and confinement to which they are subject, and in the constant presence before their eyes of their master's authority and power. This is in every way more galling and vexatious to them than to the village peasant, who has the enjoyment of his family and the comfort of his home when his task is done. The conscription is the great evil which the latter has to dread, and a most severe affliction it is when it visits him; but of this I shall take an opportunity of speaking in a future letter. The peasant cannot legally be sold or transferred from one master to another, excepting with the whole of his family; but this law is often broken or evaded. I have heard of an excellent cook to be disposed of for forty pounds, and, in another case, of a useful servant who was to be had for half the money. In fact, although this trade in human flesh is forbidden, the sale of an individual is looked upon in reality as nothing extraordinary.

There are few landed proprietors who do not carry on a manufactory of some kind or other, and this practice arises naturally out of the circumstances of the case. The riches of the Russian gentleman lie in the labour of his serfs, which it is his study to turn to good account,\* and he is the more urged to this, since the law which compels the peasant to work for him requires him to maintain the peasant. If the latter is found begging, the former is liable to a fine. He is, therefore, a master who must always keep a certain number of workmen, whether they are useful to him or not; and as every kind of

\* The income derived from an estate necessarily depends upon the system of management, and upon the profit from the labour of the peasants. I believe, however, that an annual revenue to the proprietor of thirty-three or thirty-four shillings per head, reckoning all the male serfs, young and old, may be taken as a fair average.

The largest landed proprietor in Russia is Count Cheremetieff, the number of his *souls* being computed at a hundred and ten thousand.

agricultural and out-doors employment is at a stand-still during the winter, he naturally turns to the establishment of a manufactory as a means of employing his peasants and as a source of profit to himself. In some cases the manufactory is at work only during the winter, and the people are employed in the summer in agriculture. Husbandry on an extended scale is often but an unprofitable trade in Russia, from the badness of roads, the paucity and distance of markets, and the consequent difficulty in selling produce to advantage.

The alternate employment of the same man in the field and in the factory, which would be attempted in most countries with little success, is here rendered practicable and easy by the versatile genius of the Russian peasant. One of his leading national characteristics is a general capability of turning his hand to any kind of work which he may be required to undertake. He will plough to-day, weave to-morrow, help to build a house the third day, and the fourth, if his master needs an extra coachman, he will mount the box and drive four horses abreast, as though it were his daily occupation. It is probable that none of these operations, except, perhaps, the last, will be as well performed as in a country where the division of labour is more thoroughly understood. They will all, however, be sufficiently well done *to serve the turn*, a favourite phrase in Russia. The people are a very ingenious race; but though they will carry many arts to a high degree of excellence, they are apt to stop short of the point of perfection, and their manufactures in no way rival the finish and durability of English goods.

Where the rural manufactory is established on a considerable scale, and is constantly at work, the serf operatives are put on the footing of hired labourers, and, instead of having an allotment of land, they are paid for their work, and left to provide themselves with the necessaries of life. Their master, it is true, can compel them to work in his manufactory, and that on his own terms; but these are regulated by custom; and since the serfs are paid at the same rate with the free workmen who may be employed with them, they seldom have reason to complain of injustice in this respect.

*Not only have the Russian nobles, from the nature of their*

property and the constitution of the country, become manufacturers, but they carry on the business in every branch, almost entirely to the exclusion of other classes; since they alone can command without difficulty, and on advantageous terms, the hands necessary for the purpose. A manufacturer who is not noble, being incapable by law of possessing serfs, while free labour is scarce, must compete at a disadvantage with a rival who can enforce the performance of whatever work he requires, and who has his operatives as it were under military discipline. Besides the regularly established manufactories, the exercise of various arts on a smaller scale in private houses, either for profit or for home consumption, is very general. One consequence of this system of things is, that the prices and qualities of various fabrics, such as cloth, linen, paper, glass, china, &c., are as usual subjects of general interest and of common conversation here, as are farming, planting, or draining among country gentlemen in England.

Boys are often sent to Petersburg or Moscow, as apprentices, to learn various trades, which they afterwards practise at home for the use and profit of their masters. Thus, in a remote country district, the nobles often have well-taught cabinet-makers, coach-makers, smiths, and sometimes even medical practitioners and musicians, ready at command.\*

I have often been surprised at the excellence and apparent finish of a home-made carriage. But the art of coach-making is in fact one of those most generally exercised for private use, owing, doubtless, to the number of equipages which a Russian habitually requires, and which he thus obtains at a cheap rate.

Many ladies employ a number of girls, generally the children of household servants, in embroidering and in making all kinds of fancy-work, which they execute most beautifully, and which their mistress sells; receiving orders for it, as is common in charity-schools in England. In a house where we were visiting some time ago, we were shown a shawl with corners

\* Occasionally, at the expiration of their apprenticeship, these people, instead of returning to their masters, pay them an *obrok* agreed upon as an equivalent for their services, and establish themselves in their trades on their own account in towns.

and borders of a most beautiful pattern of flowers in brilliant colours, which had been entirely made at home by a young girl, who brought it to us to exhibit, and who was then employed upon another which we saw in progress. Even the wool, the colours of which were admirable, had been dyed in the house. The shawl was valued at fifteen hundred roubles, about sixty-two pounds, and it had occupied the girl who made it about a year and a half.

In almost every house some female art is carried on, useful or ornamental; and the women are employed in spinning, weaving, knitting, carpet-making, &c.; for the raw material in Russia is worth little, and the manufactured article alone is valuable in the market.

The ladies of England, however, "who live at home at ease," little know the disagreeable and troublesome duties of inspection and correction which thus devolve upon the mistress of a family in Russia, from all the various branches of domestic industry which she is obliged to superintend. The discipline of the estate and of the household is maintained by means of the lash, from which neither sex is exempt. The frequency and severity of its use depends on the character of the master or mistress, many of whom, like those among whom I have lived, voluntarily limit the application of this punishment to male offenders, and always resort to it with great reluctance. The system, however, is revolting in itself; and it necessarily opens the door to frequent scenes of gross oppression and cruelty, where, as sometimes happens, the power is vested in hands nearly as rude as those of the serf himself. All owners of serfs are *noble*, but the law cannot make them all *gentle*.

The following anecdote, which I am assured is true, will illustrate the results of serfdom, while it will remind you of my remarks in a former letter on the Russian system of military rank, as furnishing the universal rule of precedence. Among the serfs owned by a widow lady was a girl, who had been brought up with unusual indulgence in the household, receiving a superior education, and acquiring manners far beyond those of her class; to which advantages was added the natural gift of an attractive person. At a proper age she was apprenticed at Petersburg to a French dressmaker or milliner;

and, having attained to some skill in the business, she was after a time offered profitable employment. This her mistress permitted her to accept, on the usual payment of an *obrok* to herself in lieu of personal service. The girl conducted herself well in her situation, acquiring a knowledge of French, and forming habits of some refinement. Here she attracted the notice of an officer of the rank of colonel, who in due time proved his attachment by offering her marriage. The girl accepted his proposal, and nothing remained but to obtain her freedom from her mistress, the consideration for which—or in plain words the purchase-money—the colonel was eager to pay. This ought to have been regulated by the *obrok* which the girl had paid, calculated at so many years' purchase. The lover, however, was not inclined to dispute the price the lady might demand, but on applying to her, and unfortunately explaining the state of affairs, he received for answer that on no terms whatever would she emancipate her slave. Every effort was used to shake her resolution, which appeared unaccountable; but argument, entreaty, and money were alike unavailing, and the lady remained inexorable; giving in the end the clue to her obstinacy, by observing that she would never see her serf take precedence of her, as she would do if married to a colonel, while she was herself but the widow of a major. The match was necessarily broken off, and the girl's prospect of happiness destroyed. To complete her misery, her mistress revoked her leave of absence, and ordered her immediately to return to her native village; an order which the system of passports and police rendered it impossible to resist or evade. Arrived in the village, the unhappy girl, accustomed to the habits and comforts of civilised life, was clothed in the coarse garments of an ordinary peasant, and was moreover ordered forthwith to marry a rough-bearded *moujik*, or common country labourer. Revolting at this tyranny, and refusing to obey, she was flogged, and, though she still resisted for a while, a long continuance of cruel and degrading treatment conquered her in the end; and she was forced to submit to the miserable lot entailed upon her by the wretched jealousy of her remorseless mistress. The story of this barbarity was told me with an

indignation as strong as could be felt among ourselves, but there was no redress for the sufferer. The mistress up to a certain point had the law on her side, and where she had not, as in the compulsory marriage, might overpower right. That such a case should be possible sufficiently condemns the whole system of serfdom.

## LETTER XII.

Frost — White hares — Russian game-laws — A wolf in a house — The mode in which these animals catch dogs — Anecdotes of wolves — Their haunts — Modes of destroying them — By poison, pitfalls, traps, shooting — A man besieged by wolves — Bears — Good sport — Bear-shooting — Mode in Novogorod of getting rid of bears — Singular notions with respect to these animals — Lynxes — Elks.

Rascazava, November 20th, 1837.

THE winter, according to our English ideas, has now fairly set in, and that with considerable severity. Since the beginning of this month, with the exception of a thaw once or twice for a day or two, we have had very severe frost, and the ice over the rivers is beginning to be passable even for horses and vehicles. Nevertheless, in Russia it is still considered as autumn; for, with the exception of a mere occasional sprinkling, we have as yet no snow, which is so far an advantage that the ground is dry and hard under foot, and we are not precluded from taking exercise and enjoying the sunshine.

Of all animals it appears to me that the hares just at present have most reason to wish for snow. They have now become perfectly white, and, as the ground is not yet of the same colour with themselves, they may be seen fifty yards off on their forms, and must fall a very easy prey to their enemies, the wolf and the eagle, to say nothing of human pursuers.

You perhaps may not be aware that there are game-laws in Russia which prohibit the destruction of game in the spring. The laws, however, on this subject are not, I believe, very rigidly enforced, and the protection therefore which they are intended to afford to the breeding of game is of little effect.

I was presented the other day with the skin of a large wolf; which was killed last winter under somewhat singular circumstances in a neighbouring gentleman's house. The house, which is small, is situated in a retired spot on the outskirts of



a large wood, extending up to the very door. There were some puppies about, which probably attracted the wolf, and, emboldened by famine, he followed one of them into the house—a step which eventually proved as fatal to himself as to his prey. The house-door opened into a small ante-room, on one side of which was the kitchen, and on the other a room in which the cook's wife happened to be employed at the time. This woman, seeing the animals indistinctly in the dusk, called out to her husband, who was in the kitchen, that a strange dog had followed one of the puppies into the house. The cook looked out of the kitchen-door, and saw, not a dog, but a wolf in the ante-room, devouring the unfortunate puppy. He called out to the people in the yard, who pulled to the house door, so that the trespasser could not escape; and then they fetched a gun which they handed in through the window to the cook. The wolf was now alarmed; and when the man opened the kitchen-door cautiously, and thrust forward the gun to shoot, the beast rushed at him, and, seizing the barrel of the gun in his teeth, almost pulled it out of the cook's hands. He however recovered it, and retreating secured the door. After a few minutes the cook ventured to look forth again, when he saw the wolf crouched against the door of his wife's room opposite. He called to her to make a noise inside to disturb him, upon which the beast got up, and moving aside he instantly received a shot in the head, which the cook followed up by beating out his brains with the butt-end of the gun.

Wolves are exceedingly fond of dog's-flesh, and they sometimes make use of a very cunning stratagem to obtain it. A wolf or two will approach a village in the day-time, upon which all the dogs run out and begin to bark at them. The wolves then pretend to be frightened and retire, upon which the dogs take courage and advance. At length, by alternately stopping and running away, the wolves entice a few of the more adventurous curs to a considerable distance from the village, when they suddenly turn round upon their foremost pursuers and carry them off.

Most parts of Russia are sadly infested by these animals, which commit great depredations among the cattle. They are, *generally speaking*, afraid of human beings, but they occa-

sionally pick up a child in the woods, and instances are by no means wanting of their attacking even grown-up men when the weather is very severe. These misfortunes occasionally happen in the neighbourhood of Petersburg, where the wolves are extremely numerous and very daring. At the country-house of a near relation of M—'s, about twelve miles from Petersburg, a man was, a year or two ago, attacked in the garden by a single wolf and severely wounded, escaping with difficulty with his life. The same place was the scene of another curious wolf-adventure. A disturbance was heard at night outside the house among the dogs. Several people went out to see what was the matter, but, discovering nothing, though they supposed that a wolf had been there, they came back into the house. Presently, however, they missed one of the servants, a lad of eighteen, who had been one of the first to sally forth. As he did not return, they became alarmed, and, going out again with lanterns to search for him, they were not long before they found him stretched on the ground, apparently dead, with a wolf lying by his side. The young man, happily, was only in a swoon, and he soon recovered on being raised up, but the wolf was dead. As soon as the youth was able to give an account of himself, it appeared that, on the first alarm, he had run out of the house with a large stick in his hand, and had been immediately attacked by the wolf. This so terrified him that, aiming, in his fright, one instinctive blow at his enemy, he fell down in the senseless state in which he was found. The single blow of his heavy stick had, by an extraordinary accident, hit the wolf on the head and had killed him.

When seven or eight of these animals are collected together in the winter, they are often sufficiently dangerous; and a single wolf, on meeting a man in a lonely place, will sometimes commence howling, until his friends around assemble in sufficient numbers to venture on the attack. They will occasionally even assail travellers on the high road. A friend of mine tells me that once, between Moscow and Petersburg, as he was journeying in an open sledge, it being excessively cold, he was pursued for some miles by a pack of wolves which ran by the side of the sledge, racing "with their hard gallop"

against the frightened horses at full speed, and pressing them so closely, that my friend's valet, who was sitting by his side, stabbed at the brutes with a dagger and wounded some of them as they tried to jump into the sledge. The wolves did not give up the pursuit till they met a long string of sledges, which compelled them to retire.

The wolf prefers living in small brushwood covers, near a village, to inhabiting the large forests. These however are the fastnesses of his race; and the existence of these immense tracts of wood and desert in Russia would, perhaps, defeat any attempt to rid the country entirely of those ferocious beasts; though it is difficult to believe that such a pest might not be in some measure put down if exertions were systematically made. Without combination the thing is impossible; and at present, in most parts of the country, the wolves are rarely molested. Indeed the peasants often have a prejudice against so doing, as they think it only exasperates the animals, and makes them more fierce and dangerous. Owing to this most absurd notion, the wolves in many places are suffered to become daring by impunity, and they often venture to show themselves in broad daylight, though I have never seen one myself since I have been in the country.

There are various ways of destroying wolves. Sometimes this is done by poison, the best being *nux vomica*, which does not, like arsenic, injure the fur. This is a matter of some consideration, since a wolf's skin raw is worth from eight to ten shillings. To use the *nux vomica*, a calf or other dead animal is well impregnated with the poison, and then laid in a retired spot in a wood, where the wolves find the flesh and feast on it. The effect of the poison is very rapid. I have heard of six wolves being destroyed in this manner in one place and in one night. Four were found dead on the spot, and two others were discovered afterwards at a little distance.

The Russians sometimes catch these animals in pitfalls, placing a live lamb or a pig as a bait on the top of a post rising out of the pit. They have also a kind of trap, which is exceedingly simple, but of which I never heard before I came into the country. A small circle is enclosed with a palisade or other fence, made too high for a wolf to leap or

climb over. This fence is again surrounded by another of the same kind, leaving a narrow space between the two; and the outer fence has a door, which opens inwards, so as to fill up when open the space between the two palisades. A lamb or a pig is placed at night in the inner circle, and, being alone, cold, and restless, it does not suffer in silence. The noise it makes attracts the wolf, who pushes open the door of the outer paling, and, finding the inner fence still between him and his prey, prowls round it in hopes of discovering an opening. When, having made the circuit of the place, he again reaches the door, he presses against it, and, thus shutting it to, he imprisons himself; for the space in which he is being narrow, and the backbone of a wolf being very inflexible, he cannot turn. The door is, of course, so hung as to shut from a very light pressure.

Another mode of destroying wolves is by shooting them on a moonlight night in winter. Two or three sportsmen place themselves in a sledge, with active horses, and are driven through the roads and tracts in the woods. In addition to the necessary supply of arms and ammunition they provide themselves with a lively young pig, and with a long rope to trail behind the sledge, with a wisp of straw at the end. As they go along, they pull the ears of the pig from time to time, an insult which it loudly resents in the language of its race. The wolf, hearing the complaints of the pig, and seeing the bundle of straw dancing along over the snow in the moonlight, makes a dash at the latter; mistaking it for its prey, and thus presenting a fair mark to the gunners in the sledge. Sometimes in the pursuit of this sport the disappointment is incurred of a blank night. Sometimes, on the other hand, too much game is started, and the amusement becomes somewhat dangerous. If the wolves are too numerous, and the shooters have not time to pick up those they kill, the other wolves will tear the bodies of their dead companions, and, becoming furious, will attack the sledges. A neighbour, whom we often see, met with an adventure of this kind a few years ago. After making his pig squeal for some hours in vain, he at length unexpectedly attracted such a troop of wolves that he was obliged to fly, and trust to his horses' speed to

save his life. He thus escaped, but he was pursued by twelve or fourteen of the ferocious beasts into the middle of this village.

The peasants sometimes build a hut in a wood, and throw the carcasses of dead horses and other animals near the spot to attract the wolves. They then go before nightfall, and ensconce themselves in the hut, in hopes of getting a shot through one of the loopholes which they leave in the walls of their castle. Unless, however, they build the hut very firmly and securely, they run considerable risk. I have been told a story of a man whose baits drew around him one night an unusual number of wolves. He kept firing away from his lurking-place, killing, wounding, and missing, till he had expended all his ammunition; but he was still surrounded by enemies, who, becoming infuriated, attacked his fortress, and tried to force an entrance. The garrison was unarmed, but the building was strong and resisted the assault. The wolves attempted to mine and work a way under the walls, but strong stakes, which had been providently driven in on every side, frustrated their endeavours: so at length the besiegers changed their tactics, and converted the assault into a close blockade, hoping to starve out the enemy. Through whichever of his loopholes the poor man looked out, his eyes now encountered those of a wolf seated like a dog on his haunches, and keeping patient watch. When morning came he expected these sentinels to depart; but no, they were far too inveterate; some went away, but some still remained, and a close guard was kept all day. Throughout the whole of the next night he was imprisoned; and it was not till the following day that he was released, either by the wolves getting tired of waiting, or by his friends at last coming to the rescue.

Bears, though they abound in Russia, are not to be met with, like wolves, in every part of the country. There are indeed numerous districts in which they are never heard of, for they shun cultivation and human dwellings, and they are only to be found in deep and extensive forests.

In some of those places where bears abound, there are men who make it their business in the winter to go in pursuit of *them* alone, and armed only with a strong knife and a spear;

with which implements, by courage and dexterity, they succeed in destroying these dangerous animals.

Many years ago an English or Scotch gentleman, who was settled in this country and who was a great sportsman, was shooting small game in the woods in the north of Russia, when he heard the snoring of an animal, and, looking round, after a little while he discovered the head of an enormous bear sleeping. Having only small shot in his gun, he retreated quietly, breaking the twigs as he went, in order that he might be able to find the spot again. He then made the best of his way to his temporary sporting residence, a small cottage not far off, and proceeded immediately to cast a few leaden balls. As soon as he was thus provided, he with some difficulty induced a peasant to accompany him, with an axe and a dog, to the spot where he had left the bear. The noise he made in approaching roused the animal, but, as it raised its head, the sportsman fired and killed it at a single shot. He called out in triumph to his attendant, who had kept at a respectful distance; but in the middle of his exultation a second bear came forth from behind the first. Taken as he was by surprise, he immediately fired his second barrel and broke the animal's leg; when, lo! from the same prolific lair, a third bear appeared on the scene. The dog now came up and diverted its attention, while our hero took to his heels and ran away; retreating, nevertheless, only to reload his gun, and, as soon as he had accomplished this necessary operation, gallantly returning to the charge. He now killed with his first barrel the third bear, which was still engaged with the dog, and with his second the wounded animal; having thus, single-handed, killed three bears in four shots. The peasant, as soon as he saw that they were undeniably dead, ventured forward for the first time, and began most valiantly to hack with his axe at the fallen foe.

The large bear was the dam, and, as I am assured, an enormous beast, the two others being cubs of a year old, quite strong enough to be dangerous.

In the government of Novogorod, which abounds in forests and is much infested by these animals, the peasants have, they say, a most singular method of ridding themselves of their disagreeable neighbours.

They find the young ones in the spring, and, watching their opportunity, carry them off in the absence of their parents. They then fasten them on a raft by nailing their feet to it, and set them afloat on the river. The old bears hear their cries and follow the raft down the stream, till at length the young ones die, when their parents become furious and attack whatever they meet; but they are now at a considerable distance from their original haunts, so that those who were the authors of their misfortune are not those who suffer from their vengeance. I was told this story by a lady, who assured me she had herself seen a raft floating with the young bears dead upon it.

The Russians have some singular notions about bears. Among other things they say that a fashionable pair of bears will relieve themselves from the troubles of education by employing as a preceptor for their young ones a bear of inferior rank. They afford him protection, and in return he takes charge of the young family while their parents go out to seek food. The bear leader, who is called in Russian *Pestoon*, or Pedagogue, takes his pupils to play in the sun, on the outskirts of the wood, keeping watch himself, and warning them by a cry if any danger approaches. This very sensible custom appears not to have been as yet introduced among the Novogorod bears, since it would otherwise prove a great protection to their progeny against the cruelties practised upon them in that part of the country.

Besides bears and wolves, lynxes are tolerably numerous in the forests near Petersburg; they are, however, I believe, only destructive to hares.

There are no deer in most parts of Russia; but elks may be met with in the winter within fifty miles of Petersburg. It, however, requires the assistance of one or two hundred peasants, as well as considerable skill and management, to get the elks within shot. These noble animals stand about twenty hands high; but there is little except the pleasure of the pursuit to reward the sportsman, for the skin is coarse, and the flesh by no means a delicacy.

## LETTER XIII.

A peasant's wedding — Lawful periods for marriage — Etiquette for marriages — *Mariages de convenance* — Parental authority — Anecdote of a Moscow merchant and his son-in-law.

Rascazava, November 25th, 1837.

WE had a wedding here a few days ago, and we went into the gallery of the church to witness the ceremony, which began at half-past seven in the evening and lasted nearly three-quarters of an hour. The bridegroom was a peasant of rather a superior class and in good circumstances, but still a serf; and the bride was the daughter of a Tamboff tradesman. In a case like this the wife becomes a slave, but she regains her liberty at her husband's death if she survives him.\* The church was lighted up, and a small altar was placed in the middle. In front of the altar a carpet is always stretched, on which the couple stand, each holding a lighted taper during the ceremony. They walk up to it side by side, and it is supposed that whichever first sets foot on it will hereafter have the upper hand in the household. Towards the latter part of the ceremony, after a number of prayers and hymns, two crowns of gilt metal were brought to the priest, and he placed them, after making the sign of the cross and pronouncing a short blessing, on the heads of the pair whom he was marrying; he then joined their hands and led them three times round the altar. A cup filled with wine and water was then brought, of which the bride and bridegroom tasted each three times. After this a homily was read on the mutual duties of husband and wife. At the conclusion the priest desired the newly-married couple to kiss one another,

\* This rule of law may remind us of a famous poetical dictum respecting a widow's parochial settlement in England:—

“A woman having a settlement married a man with none.

The question was, he being dead, if what she had was gone,  
Quoth Sir John Pratt, ‘The settlement suspended did remain  
Living the husband—he being dead, it doth revive again.’”



after which their friends all crowded round them with kisses and congratulations. The crowns, which had been taken off their heads, were now put on again, and they walked out of church preceded by the priest and a deacon bearing the cross, and by a boy carrying a consecrated image to be placed in their bedroom. The bride, who was rather a pretty girl and only seventeen, looked worn out with exhaustion, which was not surprising, as she had come from Tamboff that morning, a journey of six or seven hours over a bad road; while, according to the custom of her class on the occasion of their marriage, she had tasted no food all day.

The priest was to join the party at the bridal supper, and I was told that there would be further prayers and ceremonies in the house, and that the happy couple would sit all the evening with the crowns on their heads. This is a mark of distinction, as the poorer peasants do not take the crowns out of the church, having to pay an extra fee to the priest for the permission. At weddings in a higher sphere the crowns are never actually worn, but are held over the heads of the bride and bridegroom during the ceremony by their friends. No marriage can take place in the Greek church during any of the fasts, nor on any Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday. The lawful periods are therefore limited to four days in the week, and that during less than half the year. The ceremony generally takes place in the evening, and the married couple, even in the higher classes, instead of setting off immediately together into retirement for a while, according to our English fashion, are expected to remain for some time with the parents of the lady. Both are required by rigorous etiquette to write beforehand to announce their approaching union to every relation they possess, and to take the earliest opportunity after their marriage of paying them a visit uninvited. This last is, indeed, an attention which is expected not only by relations, but also by friends, and often even by mere acquaintances. A lady at Moscow told me that she was taken in this manner, as a bride, into about seventy houses, the greater part of which she had never entered since. All general rules have exceptions, but it appears to me, from all *that I have heard and can ascertain*, that a large proportion

of Russian marriages are mere matters of business and calculation, in which family interests are chiefly considered, and the feelings and inclinations of the parties most concerned little regarded, the union being arranged by the respective parents, and the principals submissively acquiescing. In the upper classes this may be a necessary and natural consequence of the restraint which is placed upon the social intercourse of the two sexes, the young men and the young ladies having rarely sufficient opportunity of becoming well acquainted with one another. Another reason for the frequency of *mariages de convenance*, and one which pervades all classes, may be found in the exaggerated notions of parental authority which prevail in this country, and which appear by no means favourable to the growth and development of true filial affection.

Parental tyranny is carried to its highest pitch among the tradesmen and the peasants, and therefore interested marriages, where the affections are in no way concerned, or rather where they are often outraged, are as common among these classes as among the higher orders. Peasants, however, cannot marry without the consent of their master, and he, therefore, has it in his power to a considerable extent to check this evil. If he wishes to do so, when his consent is asked he sends for the two young persons separately, and speaks to each in private, encouraging them to tell him the truth, and endeavouring to ascertain whether the marriage is really their own wish, or whether it has been arranged between their families without their desire. If in this manner the master discovers that they are repugnant to the union, or that their affections are fixed elsewhere, he can easily find a plausible excuse for refusing his consent to the marriage, without betraying to the parents the confidence reposed in him by their children.

The following anecdote is said to be true, and it is rather characteristic of the diamond-cut-diamond propensities of the Russian tradesman.

A marriage had been arranged between two families in the trading class at Moscow. The father of the young lady was rich, and it was agreed that he should provide her with a handsome trousseau, and that he should pay his son-in-law her fortune

of two hundred thousand roubles (about eight thousand pounds) on the morning of the wedding. The happy day at length arrived, and the trousseau or *pidannie* was, according to custom, packed in handsome chests, which were placed on cars, and paraded through the streets to the bridegroom's house, to display the wealth of the family; it having already, with the same laudable object, been exhibited in the bride's apartments to all who chose to come, whether to admire or to criticise.

Immediately before the wedding the father of the girl presented her intended husband with the promised sum as his daughter's fortune; remarking at the same time to the young man, "You can't carry such a sum of money as this to church with you, so you had better leave it in my charge at present, and you can take it home with you at night." To this proposal the other readily assented; the wedding was duly solemnised, and was as usual celebrated afterwards by a vast deal of eating and drinking; and when the happy couple went home at night, the unsuspecting bridegroom was easily persuaded to leave his money in his father-in-law's care till the following morning.

The next day he was hardly dressed when he was told that there were some men inquiring for him. He at first refused to see them, saying it was not a moment for business, and he would attend to none that day; the strangers, however, persisted, and they were at length admitted. On seeing the bridegroom, they immediately told him they were come for the chests. "What chests?" was the reply. "Why, the *pidannie*, to be sure." "Pooh!" said the young man, who supposed that the ornamented chests containing the bride's wardrobe had been hired for the occasion; "you shall have your boxes as soon as my wife has had time to unpack her things, and put them into their proper places." Upon this the lady, who was standing by, looked very foolish, while the men replied that they must have not only the chests, but also their contents. The indignant bridegroom demanded if they meant to carry off his wife's wardrobe. "Don't talk nonsense about your wife's wardrobe," said the intruders, with a provoking laugh; "you don't really suppose that all those things belong to her? the old gentleman only hired them for the occasion, to look

well at the wedding, and we are sent now to fetch them back." The bride, on being appealed to, was obliged to admit that all the men had said was true. Accordingly they carried off the handsome furs, silks, jewels, and other valuable articles of a Russian trousseau in that class of life, while the husband betook himself in no good humour to his father-in-law, to complain of his deceit, and to get the money which he had left in his charge. "What money?" said the old man, in pretended surprise. "Why," said the other, "the two hundred thousand roubles which you paid me yesterday as your daughter's fortune, and which I left in your care last night." "Ah!" said the father-in-law, laughing, "you can't pretend to be serious. The money is mine: I gave it yesterday to you to make a show before the company, and you handed it back afterwards, as it was always understood between us that you should."

It was in vain that the young man stoutly denied the assertion, and urged the payment of the money, and the fulfilment of the contract. Argument and entreaty proved alike useless. The old man kept his money-bags, and the son-in-law was obliged to return to his wife with the satisfaction of having been cheated out of her fortune, as well as her wardrobe, by her own father.

## LETTER XIV.

Winter quarters — Commencement of sledging — *Arbozes* — Projected railway — The conscription — Managed by a board — How constituted — Account of the system — What being enlisted means in Russia — Standard of height — How the conscripts are selected — On the estates of private individuals — On the estates of the crown — Oppressive circumstances occasionally arising — Age of conscripts — Substitutes — Penalty on the Board for enlisting an unfit man — Bribery — A sitting of the Board — Description of their proceedings — Examination of a conscript from a private estate — Meaning of *lop* and *zatillac* — A Crown peasant — Character of the scene — Attachment of the Russian to his family — Anecdote — Disposal of the recruits.

Tamboff, December 16th, 1837.

WE have now been settled for nearly three weeks in the town of Tamboff, where we are to spend the winter, and where the families of this district are fast assembling. We have had an uninterrupted frost since the 16th of November; but no snow, beyond a mere sprinkling, fell until Sunday last, and even then the quantity was but moderate. It was, however, sufficient to allow of the use of sledges, a few of which were in motion, to the great joy of their owners, before the ground was thoroughly white. By the following morning the droschkas and tilègas had entirely disappeared, and no wheeled vehicles were to be seen except a few gentlemen's carriages, which may be used in the streets of a town all winter.

Our English ideas of a heavy fall of snow are so closely connected with the notion of stage-coaches buried in drifts, mails due but not arrived, and parties imprisoned in country-houses, that it is a little difficult at first to enter into the feelings of the Russian, who looks forward to the same event as affording him means of traffic and communication which he could not otherwise possess. The rise of the Nile is not more interesting or important to the Egyptian than is the establishment of the trainage or snow-roads to the Russian. If this period be unduly delayed, as sometimes happens, the conse-

quences are most injurious to the country, from the difficulty of transporting goods, and from the general interruption to all traffic.

The cross-roads, especially in this part of the country, where as I have already told you there is no stone, become perfectly impassable before winter, being first cut into very deep ruts and holes during the wet weather of the autumn, and then in this condition frozen hard. It may therefore be readily supposed how welcome is the snow which spreads a smooth covering over this broken surface, and enables travellers and merchandise to glide easily and swiftly to their destination, without risk or injury.

The internal commerce of Russia is carried on in a manner quite peculiar to the country. There are no bulky stage-waggons, but all goods are transported in *tilègas*\* or sledges, according to the season, each vehicle being drawn in general by one horse. These travel in trains, which are called *arbozes*, and their traffic on the principal roads is very great, even in summer. During the whole journey from Moscow to Tamboff we were seldom half an hour without meeting or passing an *arboze*, the number of *tilègas* in each varying from fifteen or twenty up to a hundred. In the winter, however, the trains are much more numerous,† from the increased facility of travelling and the consequent cheapness of conveyance. The average load for each sledge drawn by one horse is, I am told, about seven hundredweight, the animals being for the most part small and weak.

Important as these *arbozes* are to the internal trade of Russia, they are the source of considerable inconvenience to the winter traveller. The horses are under little control, from the small proportion of drivers,‡ so that the line which they keep is but irregular, and the sledges, being on smooth wooden runners,

\* Small light waggons.

† I am credibly informed that in the winter fifty thousand sledges come daily into Moscow, loaded with provisions and goods. The charge in the winter, for conveying goods from Tamboff to Moscow, a distance of about three hundred and sixty miles, is a rouble per pood, or one penny per three and a half pounds, nearly.

‡ The law requires that there should be at least one driver to every three *tilègas* or sledges, but it is not rigorously enforced.

are constantly sliding sideways, so that it is often difficult in passing to avoid collision. All winter carriages and sledges, of a superior description have narrow irons extending under their runners, and the sharp edges, like those of a skate, preserve them from lateral motion. When the snow is deep, especially if the frost relaxes in severity, the constant passage of the *arbozzes* wears it, as I am informed, into large holes four or five feet deep, which render travelling at that time most fatiguing and laborious, and not entirely free from danger. These holes are called *ouchâbas*.

The project is now under discussion of a railway from Petersburg to Moscow. The expense must obviously be enormous of making and maintaining the road, and of establishing and keeping up steam-communication on a line of more than five hundred miles through a country devoid of great commercial towns. The Russians, however, value rapidity of locomotion beyond any other people, except perhaps the Americans; and the country between Petersburg and Moscow certainly presents great facilities to the engineer from its level character. The government therefore may perhaps hereafter be tempted to undertake a work which would enable them, if necessary, to convey troops from one capital to the other in thirty hours.

The conscription is now in active progress here, being managed by a board, of which my brother-in-law, in his capacity of marshal of the nobility, is president. He is daily engaged for several hours in the discharge of this duty, and it naturally forms a very frequent subject of conversation, the more so as I have felt much interested in obtaining some acquaintance with the system. For this purpose I attended the other day a sitting of the board to witness their proceedings. Before, however, I begin to describe them, I must give you a short general explanation of the whole affair.

Every class of Russian subjects, except the nobles and the clergy, is required in these days of peace to furnish one recruit annually out of every four hundred males. It is found, however, in practice more convenient to make the levy upon each government or province only once in two years, when, conse-

\* See account, *infra*, of a winter journey which we afterwards made, and which enabled me to speak on this point from experience.

quently, one man is called for out of every two hundred.\* This year it is the turn of Tamboff and some other governments in this part of the empire to reinforce the armies of Russia.

To examine and enlist the conscripts, Boards are appointed which sit from the 1st of November till the 31st of December, in the capital of each province, and in some of the district towns. The Board in the government town is composed of the vice-governor and some other functionaries, a medical man or two, a field-officer, and a subaltern, with a secretary and a number of clerks. In the absence of the vice-governor, which happens to occur here at present, the marshal of the government, whose office I have described in a former letter, presides in his stead. The District Boards are similarly constituted under the chairmanship of the marshal of each district. An aide-de-camp of the Emperor is always sent to see that the business is properly conducted, and that the different boards discharge their duty. He fixes his head-quarters in the government town, making occasional excursions into the districts, and exercising a general superintendence over the whole proceedings.

It is, moreover, the duty of the Imperial aide-de-camp, when the business of the conscription is closed, and the full complement of men has been enlisted, to inspect the whole body of recruits; to make a general report of the proceedings to the Emperor; and to select the finest looking men for service in the Guards.

To be made a soldier in Russia implies the being placed at the absolute disposal of the Emperor for military service either by sea or by land. All the sailors on board the men-of-war are soldiers, and they are equipped and exercised as such. The apparent absurdity often remarked of Russian naval captains wearing spurs as a part of their uniform is explained by the fact that during a part of the year they serve on land as field officers.

The minimum standard of height for the line is five feet

\* The recruit, it will be observed, must be between the ages of 20 and 35, sound in body, and at least 5 feet 3 inches in height. The 200 souls out of whom he is selected include the infant and the old man, together with all who are unfit for service. This remark will enable the reader to estimate the heavy pressure of levies such as those of 1854 and 1855.



three inches, and for the Guards five feet six inches. The recruit, when enlisted, must be between the ages of twenty and thirty-five, and he is not entitled to his discharge until he has served for twenty-five years. The wife of a soldier is free, and his children are the property of the crown, which educates the boys as soldiers, and places them in the ranks when old enough to serve.

The dread which the Russian peasant has of the conscription is not surprising, when the severity of military service and of military discipline in this country is borne in mind, and when we remember how completely in his case every tie of family or of affection is severed, and every previous hope and prospect destroyed, when once he is enrolled in the ranks of the army. In fact, to make him a soldier is the most alarming and effectual threat which a Russian master can hold out to the most vicious and refractory of his peasants, and the infliction of this dreaded punishment is reserved for the worst and the most incorrigible characters.

On the estates which belong to the crown, and which form nearly one-half of the landed property of the empire, the lot of furnishing a conscript falls upon each family in turn, according to the number of males of which it consists, the selection being made by the community of peasants themselves. The same rule holds good with regard to the traders, but their numbers are so small in proportion to the peasants, that the ranks of the army may be considered as almost entirely filled by the latter class.

When the families on the Crown estates who are to furnish recruits have been fixed upon by the community, their names are sent in to the Board which I have mentioned; and it is the duty of the Board, and the most troublesome part of its business, to ascertain that the choice is just and proper. This is done by referring to the registers in which the names and ages of all the male peasants on the estate are inserted, and also by examining the individuals themselves, and hearing all that they have to urge on their own behalf.

It not uncommonly happens that in a numerous family the sons are all too young, and that the father alone is capable of *serving*, while upon him the family depend for their mainten-

ance ; and when this occurs, the case is truly pitiable ; while, if the selection have been just,\* the Board have often no power to remedy the evil, or to discharge the conscript. When there are two or more brothers of the proper age and height, they either draw lots, or the father names which he pleases as the recruit.

Although no one can be compelled to serve until the age of twenty, young men, who are not less than seventeen, and who are of the proper height, may be received, by their own consent, in the room of others.

Substitutes are occasionally purchased ; and in this case a legal contract is drawn up beforehand, after entering into which the substitute cannot flinch from his bargain ; but before he is received as a soldier, the money, or whatever part of it remains due, must be paid to him in presence of the Board. If he wishes a portion to be given to any of his family, the persons whom he may name are called in to receive it ; and, finally, a statement of the whole transaction is entered on the minutes. To purchase a substitute costs sometimes not less than a hundred pounds ; but the peasants on the crown estates are occasionally possessed of considerable wealth, and can afford to pay thus highly for exemption from their turn of service.

The peasants belonging to the estates of private individuals afford comparatively little trouble to the Board, since it has only to ascertain that the recruit is of the proper age and height, and that he is physically qualified for service. It being the privilege of the proprietors to select any of their serfs whom they please as conscripts, they naturally endeavour to pick out the worst characters and the most useless men for this purpose. If they have none whom they wish to get rid of for misconduct, they generally make those families draw lots in which there are three or four grown-up sons, and from which therefore one can best be spared.

For every recruit who is received, and who is afterwards proved to have been at the time of enlistment physically unfit for service, each member of the Board is liable to a penalty of five hundred roubles, about twenty pounds.

Bribery often prevails to a great extent in the business of

\* I must observe that it is a general instruction to the Board to avoid *ruining any family*.

the recruitment; masters paying to have bad characters, who are unfit for soldiers, received; and conscripts who are fit for service paying to be rejected. Clerks are sometimes detected in receiving from fifty to a hundred roubles from poor fellows, for protection which they promise, but which they have no power to give; and these gentlemen are occasionally punished by being made soldiers themselves. The doctor, too, in examining the conscripts, not unfrequently, when he inspects their teeth, finds, not a silver spoon, but a gold piece in their mouths, which he is intended to pocket, pronouncing the man in return unfit for service.

But the system of bribery is not always confined to these petty offences. The roubles are sometimes paid in thousands; and the receivers are neither the clerks nor the surgeons to the Board. It is said that the president, if he manages matters well, may clear during the two months of the sitting upwards of two thousand pounds. When this is the case, clerks receive their mites with impunity; and gold pieces are quietly transferred from the mouths of the conscripts to the pockets of the doctor; instead of being publicly laid on the table of the board, as happens almost daily here. For the president is known to be incorruptible himself, and therefore not inclined to connive at the delinquencies and peculations of others.

Having, as I have already told you, attended a sitting of the board of enlistment, I will endeavour to make you acquainted with their manner of proceeding, by giving you some description of the scene.

The members, as well as the doctors and the secretary, all appear in the civil uniform, which differs little from the military, except in the absence of epaulettes. A standard measure, which cannot be lowered below five feet three inches, is placed in the room, and this is flanked on either side by a tall corporal.

The ante-room is crowded with peasants; and there are a certain number of soldiers and policemen in attendance to keep order. I must premise that when a man is received as a soldier a patch is immediately shaved on his forehead to mark him; while, if he is rejected, a patch is shaved at the back of his neck, to show that he has been examined, and to prevent his being brought forward a second time. At the conclusion of each day's sitting the recruits who have been enlisted are

marched in a body to a church, where they take the oaths of allegiance and fidelity before a priest.

To return to the proceedings of the Board: we will suppose the business to begin with the examination of the conscripts furnished from the private estate of a noble.

At the president's order one of the corporals in attendance opens the door into the ante-room, and calls out for the peasants of Ivan Petroitch Pashkoff to be in readiness: the president then reads out A. B., the first name on the list of conscripts sent by Mr. Pashkoff.

"A. B., come in!" shouts the corporal, and in walks A. B. *stark naked*. He is first placed under the standard, the corporal on either side taking care that he holds himself upright, which he is not very willing to do.

"Five feet four inches," \* says the corporal. The president enters the man's height opposite to his name in a book; and the conscript is then handed over to the doctor, who pronounces him sound and fit for service. The field-officer then examines him, to ascertain that there is no peculiarity in his person, such as his being very much bandy-legged or knock-kneed, or having an extraordinarily-shaped head, which would interfere with his wearing uniform. He also pronounces his approval of the recruit. The president enters everything in his book, and simply calls out "*Lop*" (forehead). The corporal instantly shoves A. B. out of the room, shouting "*Lop*."—*Lop, lop*, is repeated in the ante-room, and the man is taken straight into another apartment, where his forehead is shaved, and he finds himself an enlisted soldier. In the mean time, C. D. appears before the Board. He is, perhaps, too short; for if a sheet of paper can be passed between the man's head and the measure marking five feet three, he is rejected; or else the doctor or inspecting officer finds that he is physically unfit for the service. The president calls out "*Zatillac*" (neck); C. D. is shoved out of the room; "*Zatillac, zatillac*" is repeated in the ante-room; the back of the man's neck is shaved, and he is set at liberty. If a man declares himself to be labouring under any defect, or to be subject to any complaint unfitting

\* This is expressed in Russian in a manner which, if literally translated, would be unintelligible in English. Five feet three inches, it will be remembered, is the minimum height for a soldier.

him for a soldier, while the case is such that the truth cannot be ascertained at the moment, he is sent to the hospital for further examination, and a report on his case is sent to the Board the following day. These poor men often counterfeit fits and other infirmities, in order to avoid being enlisted; but if they are discovered, they are liable to severe punishment, and their privilege of claiming a discharge after twenty-five years' service is sometimes taken away from them.

When the turn of the crown peasants comes, three brothers perhaps enter together, one of whom is to be selected. They are accompanied by their father and mother, and their wives and children, if they have any; decency being laid aside, for the three young men, like all the conscripts, present themselves *stark naked*. The board, after referring to the register, and after hearing all that the men, or that their father and mother have to urge in their behalf, decide that it is justly the turn of this family to furnish a conscript. The three brothers are therefore measured and examined, as in the case which I have already described. The result we will suppose to be that the eldest is tall and healthy, but he has a wife and three or four children; the second measures but five feet two inches; and the third brother is a fine growing lad of eighteen. Of the three, therefore, the youngest is under age, and the second is under size. They, therefore, are legally exempted from the conscription, and the eldest brother must be taken away from his wife and family, and must become a soldier, unless the lad of eighteen will voluntarily consent to serve in his stead.

A scene now ensues, which is at the same time both pathetic and ludicrous. The elder brother and his wife, the father and mother, and the little children, all throw themselves on the ground and prostrate themselves repeatedly at the feet of the young man, beseeching him to have pity on the family of his brother, and to consent to be enlisted in his place. The poor lad looks with a bewildered air from one to another, not exactly knowing what to do; on the one hand, having no fancy to become a soldier, and, on the other hand, wanting resolution positively to refuse. He is pressed on every side, for the members of the Board add their exhortations to the entreaties of his family. Some bid him be a good Christian and sacrifice himself for *his relatives*, while others encourage him with the promise of

good treatment in the army if he will enter it. At last, completely overpowered, the poor boy musters up courage, crosses himself, and consents to be a soldier.

The conscription frequently gives rise to most pitiable scenes, when it happens that married men, or the sons of widows or aged parents, are torn away from families of which they were the chief prop and stay. The recruits often weep bitterly and lament their hard lot when they come before the Board to be examined; but the moment they are enlisted and their fate decided, they seem to cheer up and recover their spirits, as though they thought it useless to grieve any longer.

The Russian peasants are extremely attached to one another in their families, and it rarely happens that there is much difficulty in persuading a young man to devote himself for a relation. On the contrary, they often persist in doing so, for the sake of an elder brother, or an uncle, against the advice of all around them. The other day, a lad under twenty, whose married brother was nominated as a conscript, insisted upon coming here with him, in order, as he said, to see his fate. The man was accepted as a recruit, and the father, coming out, said to his younger son, who was waiting in the street, "They have taken your brother, Gabriel." Gabriel, without answering, rushed into the house, pressed through the crowd in attendance, and hurried, breathless, into the board-room, fearful of being too late to offer himself as a substitute for his married brother. He appeared, however, in ample time, and, being a fine young man, was readily enlisted in the place of the other.

The recruits, after being sworn in, receive at once a great-coat and cap, a pair of boots, and some other necessities; and they are then quartered in barracks, detachments being occasionally draughted off to the neighbouring towns. Their beards are immediately removed, the moustaches alone being left; and in this severe weather it is quite pitiable to see the raw chins of these poor fellows, who have just been shaved for the first time in their lives.\*

\* It will be observed that, in 1837, the average annual drain on the population of Russia, liable to the conscription, was only two and a half per thousand males.

## LETTER XV.

Effects of charcoal vapour—The Russian stove—Warmth of houses—Fire-places—Death from charcoal vapour—Convicts on their way to Siberia—Rural police—Punishment of a peasant—Of a noble—The knout—Martial law—Running the gauntlet—Erroneous penal system—A General degraded to the ranks—Prevalence of bribery—A lucrative post—Want of public opinion—Inadequacy of legitimate emoluments.

Tamboff, December 23rd, 1837.

IN my last letter I told you that the Emperor always sent one of his aides-de-camp into each province at the period of the recruitment. The officer\* who is at present charged with this duty at Tamboff, and who has the good fortune to have attained the rank of Colonel at the age of thirty-two, nearly lost his life the other day in a most ignoble manner, namely, from the effects of charcoal vapour in his lodgings. Fatal accidents of this kind are not very uncommon in this country, arising either from ill-constructed stoves or from carelessness in those who have the charge of them.

The Russian stove is a sort of oven, with a flue which can be opened or closed at pleasure, and with apertures to admit the warm air into the room. The fire is made entirely with wood, and when it is lighted the flue is opened and the valves are closed. The fuel, as it burns out, is beaten small, and when it is entirely reduced to ashes and the flame and smoke have quite disappeared, the flue is stopped, a handful of salt being first thrown on the remains of the fire. In a couple of hours afterwards the valves may be opened and the hot air allowed

\* (Note, second edition.)—The Emperor's aide-de-camp, Colonel Boutourlin, of the regiment of Chevaliers-Gardes, was an admirable specimen of the Russian officer of the best class. He combined the bearing of a soldier with the address and accomplishments of a finished gentleman, and his presence at Tamboff added during his stay a great attraction to the very agreeable society of the place. He died as he had lived—a soldier. General Boutourlin fell in Wallachia, in action, in 1854.

to circulate. If, however, the smallest piece of wood remains smouldering after the chimney has been closed, the poisonous vapour from the charcoal penetrates into the rooms. Its presence is easily detected from its smell, especially by those who enter from the open air; but sometimes the first intimation which those who are in the apartments have of the existence of vapour is given by a sudden and racking headache, which is followed in time by stupor and inability to move. If the vapour has been breathed for some time before it is detected, its effects are often felt for several days afterwards, if not followed by a fatal result.

Colonel Boutourlin, the aide-de-camp, had lain down to sleep on a sofa in the afternoon, and his servant awoke him, according to orders, at five o'clock. He got up and at once fell flat on the floor, feeling a strange confusion in his head, and, as he says, hardly knowing where he was. He managed to get on his legs, but he immediately fell again, and, rising up a second time and endeavouring to make his way to the door, his servant fortunately heard him and came to his master's assistance; not, however, until he had fallen down a third time and cut his face severely against the sharp corner of the door. A doctor was immediately sent for, who at once discovered the cause of the attack in the presence of charcoal vapour. He bathed his patient's head with spirits of wine and eau de Cologne, and as soon as he was sufficiently recovered, he sent him out in an open carriage and ordered him to drive about for a considerable time for the sake of air. He continued very unwell for some days from the effect of the vapour, and his face is considerably marked by the bruises he sustained in his fall.

As soon as the poisonous vapour is detected, the windows are thrown open, however severe the cold may be, and the rooms are fumigated with burnt vinegar, the flue of the stove being at the same time unclosed.

When the stove, or *peeck* as it is called, is badly constructed, no care can entirely preserve the rooms from vapour; since in this case the hot air, which, for some time after stopping the flue, is always pernicious, will find a way to escape from the stove even before the valves are opened.

If it were not for the danger attending them, which indeed



is confined almost entirely to the case of inferior houses, where small pains are taken in the construction of the stove, these Russian *peeches* would be most excellent inventions, as they consume but little fuel. They only require a fire to be kept up for about an hour every day, while the heat which they produce lasts for twenty-four hours, and can be regulated at pleasure. The rooms are free from draughts, and all parts of the house are equally well warmed. There are no cold entrances or passages, and since the heat is retained all night, there is no cold room to dress in on getting up in the morning.

The houses are in general thoroughly warm all winter; that is to say, from the beginning of October till April or May; because the stoves are regularly heated, and the double windows exclude entirely the outward air—a single pane, called a *forteshka*, being left to open for the purposes of ventilation.

It is only in the chilly evenings or rainy days of summer that one ever feels cold in a Russian house. Open grates, in addition to the *peech*, are daily increasing in fashion, and there are few good houses without them. They are not, however, as yet universal, being regarded as luxuries, though they really make the greatest possible difference in the comfort and wholesomeness of the rooms where they are found. Without fire-places the houses are often damp and chilly in the summer evenings, and there are no means of lighting an impromptu fire; a *peech* requiring some hours before its good effects are felt.

As for the peasants' houses, these are kept nearly all the year round at the temperature of an oven; and the people are so inured from childhood to an atmosphere strongly impregnated with charcoal vapour, that in general they feel no inconvenience from it, though they are not proof against its fatal effects when in overpowering quantities. Unhappily a man and a boy, on my brother-in-law's estate, have within the last month fallen victims to this subtle poison from their own imprudence. They went, in spite of prohibition and caution, to enjoy the warmth of a stove which had been lighted to dry corn, and, soon falling asleep, they never woke.

Tamboff lies on the high road from Moscow into Siberia, and we see almost every week convicts passing through on

their way thither. They travel on foot; some coupled together with handcuffs, and all with chains on their legs. They are guarded by foot-soldiers with loaded muskets, assisted by two or three mounted Cossacks armed with lances. They march about twelve miles a day; there being at that distance apart, along the road, places of security in which they are lodged at night. The party, which consists on an average of about twenty prisoners, with eight or ten soldiers, is usually followed by two or three tilègas or sledges to carry baggage, or to convey those who may fall sick or lame upon the road.

The prisoners are always well wrapped up in sheepskin coats and warm caps. The soldiers, in their dirty great-coats, with a loose collar of cloth or fur to protect their ears, look not very unlike ancient London watchmen. The female convicts travel in separate gangs in the same way as the men.

I have never seen any prisoners who appeared to be other than ordinary ruffians, but state-criminals of the highest distinction are usually compelled to travel in the same wearisome and painful manner into Siberia. As to the treatment of the convicts on the journey, it is said that they are better fed than the soldiers who guard them.

In trivial matters the police of Russia in the rural districts is chiefly maintained by the proprietors, each keeping order on his own estate. There are, however, magistrates called *ispravniks*, who are elected by the nobles from among themselves, and whose authority corresponds in some measure to that of an English justice of the peace. The *ispravnik* has a number of subordinates, who act as constables under his orders, and he fulfils in the country the duties which in towns are discharged by the Master of Police.

The authority of masters over their serfs, and their power of punishing and maltreating them, is restrained by law; but laws which defend the weak against the strong are little enforced in Russia. Practically, I believe that the power of the master, especially in remote districts, may be looked upon as nearly uncontrolled. The serf may complain, but his master is the friend of the *ispravnik* or of some other authority; or else perhaps a few hundred roubles thrown into the scale of justice

destroy its balance : so that the unfortunate peasant can seldom obtain redress for his wrongs. When a peasant is convicted by law of an ordinary offence, he is usually flogged ; for more serious crimes he is made a soldier, or is sent to Siberia, after receiving the *knout*.\* According to his crime there is a great difference in his fate when he reaches the place of his destination in Siberia. In some cases he is in the comparatively easy position of a colonist, under the surveillance of the police. In other instances he is compelled to labour in the mines, and is treated with the utmost severity as a convict in a penal settlement.

The treatment of a noble when convicted of a crime is only different from that of a peasant in that he is exempt from corporal punishment. He is degraded from his nobility if sentenced to Siberia, or made a soldier, and he enjoys none of the privileges of his class for the future. A total forfeiture of property accompanies the loss of nobility.

It is often boasted that there is no capital punishment in the Russian code, but the professed leniency of the law is not unfrequently evaded in practice. The *knout* is inflicted, excepting on nobles, for all grave offences. In cases of murder or of other heinous crimes, “ *without mercy* ” is marked on the sentence, and in this case the punishment is often death, although more than twenty-five blows cannot be inflicted. It is said that there are executioners so terribly skilful, that with three strokes of the *knout* they can destroy life.

Nothing can be said in defence of a system which thus inflicts a death of torture without the sanction of law, by a subterfuge, and as though by accident. It degrades punishment into cruelty.

In the martial law of Russia a similar practice exists, though capital punishment is not, I presume, altogether excluded from the military code even in time of peace. A soldier was lately tried at a garrison in this province for running his officer through with a bayonet. The sentence was, that he should run the gauntlet four times through a thousand men, *without going to the hospital*. The addition of this last clause implied that

\* The pronunciation of the *k* in this word is very strongly marked ; the *ou* is pronounced as *oo* in *boot*.

the soldier was to be flogged to death. In ordinary cases such a punishment is inflicted by successive instalments, the culprit being sent in the interims to the hospital, and a surgeon being at each time in attendance to see that his life is not endangered. The compelling a man to run the gauntlet is no unusual punishment in the Russian army. The troops form a lane, up which the criminal passes, with a soldier before and another behind him to regulate his march. Each man in the line is armed with a stick, with which he is obliged to give the prisoner a blow as he passes, under the penalty of being severely punished himself if he evades doing so. When a prisoner who *is not to go to the hospital* can no longer walk he is placed on a cart, and the punishment is continued whether he lives or dies, for it is said that in the latter case the full tale of blows awarded by the sentence is completed on the senseless corpse.

A most erroneous part of the Russian penal system appears to be that of sentencing civil offenders of all kinds to serve as soldiers. If a steward cheats his employer, or a servant robs his master, the culprit is made a soldier. If a coachman drives over a person in the street, he is seized by the police and made a soldier;\* and his master himself, if he embezzles money, or takes a bribe and is detected, is equally made a soldier.

It is the great object of the Russian government to encourage and uphold the army; and yet its ranks are daily swelled with thieves, vagabonds, and drunkards. The private soldiers can hardly feel much respect for an uniform thus tarnished; while their respect for their officers must be diminished at seeing the General who commanded them yesterday, sentenced, for some breach of duty or some act of disobedience to his superior, to bear a musket in the ranks to-day. Occurrences of this sort, though naturally not very common, yet are by no means unknown.

Some years ago, a General who was in high favour with the Emperor, and who held an office of importance, received an

\* The law in this case is most severe, and often extremely oppressive and unjust. If a carriage is accidentally driven over any person so as to hurt him, whatever may be the merits of the case, the horses are forfeited to the Crown, and the coachman, if a Russian peasant, is sentenced to be a soldier.

Ukase or Imperial order which nearly affected the interests of an intimate friend. From a regard to his friend, instead of executing the Ukase, he put it in his pocket, and allowed a month to pass without taking the steps which his duty required. For this offence he was tried and found guilty, and the following sentence was pronounced and executed. He was brought in full uniform, with his stars and other decorations, into a room where the ordinary business of receiving conscripts was going on, as described in my last letter. The General was stripped; he was put, according to the usual form, under the standard; his height was noted down; his forehead was ordered to be shaved, and he was taken out of the room a common soldier, and sent to Siberia.

Those who are thus condemned to serve as soldiers are not altogether placed on the same footing as the ordinary recruits. They are not entitled to their discharge at the end of twenty-five years, and they are, if their offences have been serious, sent into a penal corps. Still they are soldiers, and to be made a soldier has thus become connected with the idea of disgrace and punishment; by which the moral tone and *esprit de corps* of the army must be greatly lowered.

The great national disgrace of the Russian character is undoubtedly the universal corruption which pervades every department in the state. This charge can hardly be denied; for every Russian will tell you, "There is nothing to be done in our country without a bribe." The only difference appears to be in the amount, which is proportioned to the rank of the receiver. At the foot of the scale three or four roubles may suffice, while as many thousands may be requisite for the important personage at the head.

No one will be unjust enough to suppose that honest men are not to be found here as well as in other countries, and I should be sorry so far to calumniate Russia as even to suggest that they were rare. Still, from all that I have heard in various quarters, I cannot doubt of the lamentable prevalence of gross corruption. The fact of a person in a high and dignified position receiving a bribe to secure his good offices does not cause a serious scandal here, or seem to be regarded with that degree of contempt and indignation which would mark a

nice sense of national honour and a high standard of public opinion.

As an instance, the salary of a governor of a province is twelve thousand roubles a-year, or about five hundred pounds; a sum which is quite insufficient to cover the expenses of his establishment. Yet I am told that a late governor of Saratoff, on the Volga, one of the richest provinces in Russia, retired, after holding the office for six years only, with a capital, not seriously realized during that period, of three millions of roubles, about a hundred and twenty thousand pounds. I inquired how this was possible, and the following is, in substance, the explanation which I received.

This Governor usually abstained from any direct acts of private injustice or oppression; but for value received he consented to shut his eyes and not to interfere with the misdoings of his inferiors. He, in fact, sold his protection wholesale to his subordinates, leaving them to dispose of their good offices by retail for their own profit according to the demand.

In each of the *twelve* districts of every government is an *ispravnik*, an officer whom I have already mentioned as a rural magistrate or master of police. Each *ispravnik* paid his Excellency the Governor five thousand roubles a-year, a douceur which obliterated any little peccadilloes of the officer, or any mistakes into which he might fall in administering justice.

The Bashkirs, and other wild tribes who dwell in the Steppes beyond the Volga, wished to remain in undisturbed possession of lands claimed by the Crown. The Governor threatened them with forcible ejection, but his annual revenue was increased by thirty or forty thousand roubles, and the Bashkirs were left in repose.

The province, again, abounded in heretics, of a sect regarded with much jealousy by government, and much persecuted for their political rather than for their religious opinions. These sectarians longed for peace and quiet, and the price of the Governor's toleration was from one to two hundred thousand roubles a-year.

Certain salt-works at Saratoff, which supply all Russia with that article, contributed more than a mite to the pocket of his

Excellency; and his purse was replenished from numerous other sources not included in this catalogue.

It is not every one who is so successful in enriching himself as was this Governor. He was not, however, held up as an extraordinary instance of rapacity, but was rather admired for his cleverness in turning to account the opportunities which he enjoyed. I was assured that he left an excellent character behind him, and that he was much regretted in the province.

The Emperor, I believe, does all in his power to check and discourage this disgraceful system of corruption, by visiting offenders with the utmost severity. Few of the great culprits, however, are detected, and it is impossible that such malpractices should be eradicated so long as the sources exist out of which they naturally arise. These appear chiefly to be, first, the utter inadequacy of the legitimate emoluments attached to every office and employment, and, secondly, the total absence of a sound and healthy state of public opinion in Russia.

The former of these causes renders a man needy and liable to temptation, and the latter secures him from the disgrace which ought to be the severest punishment of his misconduct.

## LETTER XVI.

Belief in powers of images and saints — Madame B. — A *maigre* dinner — The Archbishop of Tamboff — Variety of dishes — A toast — Dinner visits — Anecdote.

Tamboff, December 27th, 1837.

I TOLD you in a former letter that the upper classes of Russia were usually by no means strict in their observance of the fasts and ceremonies of the Church; but there are some striking exceptions, more especially among the ladies. Of these we have rather a remarkable example in the society of Tamboff. We have a lady here who, in her attention to all such points, is most rigid and undeviating, and who, moreover, by her evidently sincere belief in the miraculous virtues of images and reliques, reminds me of some characters depicted in mediæval history, the like of whom I scarcely expected to meet with in real life in this nineteenth century.

This lady, having a daughter unwell a few years ago, dreamed that a monk came to her and told her that if she took her child to the shrine of a certain saint at Veronish, a town at no very great distance from Tamboff, she would be cured. Madame B., for so we will call her, followed the advice of her nocturnal counsellor; and the young lady, after the pilgrimage to Veronish, in due time recovered her health. Her mother attributed her restoration entirely to the miraculous interference of the saint, and, out of gratitude for the cure, she made a vow to live for the rest of her days as a nun; that is to say, to eat only fish, vegetables, and the like, abstaining entirely from meat. She has a picture of the saint as the *image* in her private room, and she declares that, by putting a piece of paper, in which this image had been wrapped, under her pillow at night, she was lately cured of a violent headache. She is, indeed, a firm believer in charms of all kinds. Lately I saw her produce, out of a pile



of recipes for the cure of colds, coughs, and sore throats, a slip of paper which she said contained an excellent remedy for the bite of a mad dog; adding that, extraordinary as we might think it, she herself had witnessed its good effects. In one corner were written three short words, which she said must be copied on little bits of paper, and the latter then rolled up into the form of pills, three of which were to be swallowed daily for the space of nine days.

A few days ago Madame B. gave a grand dinner to the Archbishop on the consecration of a new altar in one of the churches of Tamboff. She was kind enough to invite us to the entertainment, and you will perhaps be amused by some description of it.

As we were then in the middle of the six weeks' fast of the Greek Church preceding Christmas, the dinner could not be otherwise than exclusively *maigre* in the presence of the Archbishop; and the invitation to us was accompanied by a few words of explanation on this point. The dinner itself seemed intended to convince us that cooks, if really artistes, are independent of butchers. No sign of asceticism appeared among the guests, or in the fare itself, which was as suitable for mortifying the appetite as is a fish dinner at Greenwich—the only thing at all resembling it in England.

We went to Madame B.'s house at about half-past two, and we found the Archbishop there, and many guests already assembled. Most persons on entering the room went up to his Eminence and kissed his hand, receiving his blessing. The Archbishop of Tamboff is a strong, harsh-featured man of about forty, with no great expression of dignity in his countenance, though it is grave and calm. He was dressed in a long robe, or caftan, of dark-brown flowered satin, with large sleeves, displaying an under-dress of pale green silk. He was decorated with the red ribbon, cross, and star of St. Anne, and on his breast hung a miniature image, set in diamonds. In his hand he held a rosary of white beads; and on his head he wore the usual monk's cap of black velvet, made like a hat without a rim, and with a hood or veil hanging down behind. The whole party amounted to twenty-nine, among whom were several priests, and one monk, attendants on the Prelate. When dinner was announced, the Archbishop led the procession into

the dining-room, walking alone at the head of the guests. The choristers of his convent were placed in a gallery, and they sung a grace before we sat down, and several hymns at intervals during dinner. Unfortunately, they were placed rather nearer to us than they should have been, and their voices, adapted to a church, were too loud for the room. The dinner, which consisted entirely of fish and vegetables under various forms, was most *recherché*, and was served in the best possible style; but the number of dishes, between the *sterlet* soup which headed the banquet, and the ice which ushered in the dessert, was so great, that, although each was handed round in duplicate, we were nearly three hours at table. The variety of good things really appeared interminable. Wine of every kind was handed round in turn, and the object seemed to be that of showing how luxuriously people might fare without the use of meat, while the whole thing amounted to a practical satire on the Russian system of fasting.

Towards the conclusion of dinner, while the servants were handing round champagne, a deacon, who was seated near the bottom of the table, rose from his seat, and placed himself before the image in the corner of the room. I did not understand what he was about, but I supposed that he was appointed to say grace, and that he had rather mistaken his time, as the dinner was not quite concluded. However, he kept looking over his shoulder, his back being turned to the table, and he evidently awaited a signal. At last he apparently received it, for he suddenly opened his mouth, and thundered forth a chant in a deep bass voice, while in an instant the whole party, excepting the Archbishop, rose to their feet, and I was utterly at a loss to comprehend the scene.

On the one side I saw the deacon singing with the voice of a Stentor, and bowing and crossing himself before the image; and I might have supposed myself in a church. If I looked the other way, there were the guests standing up on both sides of the table, each with a bumper of champagne in his right hand, and we seemed to be a convivial party doing honour to a popular toast. This incongruous spectacle lasted for two or three minutes, when the chant ceased, and we all resumed our seats. I then asked my neighbour, who was

somewhat amused at my surprise, what all this meant, and he told me we had only been drinking with the usual forms the health of the prelate at the top of the table.

I am very glad to have had an opportunity of witnessing an entertainment of this kind, as it is not an every-day occurrence; and much of it was both new to me and strongly characteristic of Russian manners and customs. In general, however, it must be owned that a formal dinner at three o'clock, the fashionable hour at Tamboff, is not a thing to be desired. It breaks up the day, and the whole affair is generally over, and the house clear of guests, by five, just as the ice might otherwise have begun to thaw, and the society might have become a little animated. At dinner the two sexes are carefully separated, the ladies sitting on one side of the table and the gentlemen on the other, as though they were afraid of one another; in consequence of which arrangement, the conversation at table is rather apt to be dull and languid.

Sometimes the entertainer, instead of sitting down with his guests, spends most of his time during dinner in walking about from one to another, and in seeing that the servants are alert in attending to their duties. This is, however, an antiquated notion of hospitality, and the practice is obsolete in good Russian society.

It may almost seem ungrateful on my part thus to criticise the habits of a place where we have received so much hospitality, and have made so many agreeable acquaintances and friends. I wish, however, to put before your eyes a picture of Russia as it is; and we are perhaps rendered hyper-fastidious by the pleasant evenings we spend with our kind hosts at home.

My brother-in-law himself received a great part of his education in England, and on his return to Russia he entered the Semenofsky Regiment of Guards.\* He retired, however, comparatively early from the service, in consequence of a severe wound which he received at the battle of Lutzen. He is now a most intelligent and active man of business, with a truly

\* Among my brother-in-law's comrades and most intimate friends was General Mouravieff, who, when the garrison of Kars, after their protracted defence under the gallant General Williams, were at length forced by starvation to capitulate, showed like a true soldier that he knew how to appreciate the courage of a brave enemy in misfortune.

English sense of honour and love of integrity. His wife has visited England, and before her marriage she lived chiefly in the society of Petersburg, as one of the maids of honour of the Empress. They both speak English nearly as well as we speak it ourselves; and with their knowledge of the world, and thorough acquaintance with the peculiarities and institutions of their own country, we could not be in better hands for information or entertainment. Of their kindness and hospitality our prolonged visit is a standing proof.

Not unfrequently an agreeable neighbour or two come uninvited to dinner or to tea, and we pass our pleasantest evenings in the easy conversation of this intimate society. A few evenings ago a small party of this kind had assembled, and the subject of *presentiments* came under discussion. Every one had his story, drawn from his own experience or that of his friends, of a presentiment fulfilled in some unlooked-for manner. At last my sister-in-law told us the following anecdote, many of the particulars of which had occurred within her own knowledge, while the rest are well authenticated. The story may almost rival the tale of Polycrates, tyrant of Samos, of famous memory.

She said that in former days she had been intimate at Petersburg with a lady who married a General R—.\* Years passed, and the General was appointed to a command at Warsaw, their family now consisting of seven children, of whom the eldest was a beautiful girl of eighteen. After the General and his family had been for some time established at Warsaw, Madame R— wrote to my sister-in-law giving her an account of a visit which the Emperor Nicholas and the Empress had paid to the capital of Poland, adding that a remarkable tide of fortune had on this occasion flowed in upon themselves. In the space of little more than a week her husband had been appointed Aide-de-Camp General to the Emperor; she herself had received the *Cockade*, a decoration conferring on a lady precedence at Court; her daughter had been named maid of honour to the Empress; and her eldest son had received a

\* (Note to second edition.)—This anecdote was not given in the former edition, but so many years have now passed that no pain can be caused by its publication.

commission. Madame R— concluded her letter by saying, "I assure you so much good fortune frightens me, and I cannot enjoy it from a dread that some reverse must come." For this apprehension there seemed no grounds when her letter arrived; but about six months afterwards Madame R— was sitting at home at Warsaw working, with her daughter by her side, when the latter said, "Mamma, I've such a headache that I must go and lie down." Her mother's bed-room opened, as is usual, into the sitting-room, and the girl went into it and lay down, leaving the door open. Madame R— continued working, and after a time, chancing to look up, she saw her daughter had come back and was sitting again by her. She noticed, however, that she had changed her dress, and she said, "Sophie, I thought you meant to lie down and keep your head quiet." To this remark there was no answer, and the girl seemed not to hear. She then called her sharply by name to rouse her; upon which Sophie answered out of the next room, and immediately appeared at the door. She looked towards her mother, and said, in a terrified voice, "Good Heavens! there I am!" bursting into tears, and saying she had not long to live. The figure in the chair then vanished. Her mother did not confess that the figure had been visible to herself, but she told her daughter that she must have seen herself suddenly in the glass. However, next day poor Sophie was seized with scarlet fever, and she died in a fortnight.

A few months after this sad event the Polish Revolution broke out, and General R—, being captured by the Poles, was imprisoned at Warsaw for three months, during which time he endured the most cruel treatment. His wife escaped with her children to Vienna, where for some time she was absolutely dependent on charity. A sister, married to a Russian Colonel of Artillery, accompanied her to Vienna, leaving of necessity her husband at his post. In an engagement with the Poles, the Colonel's men mutinied and refused to fire at a critical moment. In despair he blew his own brains out with a pistol on the spot. General R—'s health was so shattered by his sufferings and privations in prison that he did not survive his release many months. His widow has since lost another

daughter, and she is now living in reduced circumstances at Petersburg.

My sister-in-law added, "Such is my instance of a presentiment realised. With respect to the marvellous part of the story, 'I but say the tale as 'twas said to me;' but my authority is Madame R— herself, who is by nature a particularly gay and happy-minded person, without a tinge of romance or enthusiasm in her character. I can answer for it that the letter I received from her in the heyday of her prosperity expressing her presentiments was genuine, and that her subsequent misfortunes are well-established and notorious matters of fact."

## LETTER XVII.

Severity of frost — Frost-bites — Snow-storms in the Steppes — Panic — Destruction of the Winter Palace by fire — Conduct of the Emperor and Empress — Anecdote — Washerwomen in winter — Sentinels — Christmas gaieties — Mode of issuing invitations — Morning calls — Ladies' dress — Evening parties — Room for improvement — Separation of the sexes in society — Secret police — Count Benkendorf — National reserve — Remarkable occurrence at a masquerade.

Tamboff, January 16th, 1837.

THE frost has now lasted for two months without interruption, and the winter is considered very severe even for Russia. We have frequently had by Reaumur's thermometer \* twenty-four or twenty-five, and sometimes even thirty, degrees of frost. And the intensity of this cold has been often increased by wind; for twenty degrees of frost on a still day are more supportable than ten with a wind. The difficulty in going out is to preserve the face, especially the nose and forehead, from being frost-bitten or rather frozen. When this misfortune occurs no pain is felt, but the part affected becomes hard and white.† It is easily cured at first by rubbing the skin with snow till the circulation is restored; but if it is neglected the effects of the frost are very painful, and sometimes a wound ensues which may end in mortification. If the skin be blistered the application of goose-oil is considered an excellent remedy. Four years ago upwards of five hundred persons were frozen to death in the course of the winter in this Government, which, it must be remembered, consists chiefly of open steppes, where the effects of a high wind are most formidable. The snow is blown into enormous drifts, burying man and horse, while it entirely obliterates the tracks; and the traveller who loses his way must almost inevitably perish on these unsheltered plains. From the scarcity of wood on the steppes the inhabitants have little fuel, except straw and

\* One degree of Reaumur's scale equals two and a quarter of Fahrenheit's, nearly.

† A stranger will often stop a person in the street to tell him that his nose or his cheek is frozen.

dried cow-dung; the latter, it is said, making a very hot fire, and, if properly managed, being entirely free from any unpleasant smell when burning. In the severe winter which I have mentioned, viz. that of 1833-4, a complete panic was excited. A gloomy foreboding of evil seized men's imaginations, and not only many among the common people, but even some of a higher class, were terrified by a prophecy which announced that on the first day of the new year then ensuing there would be no less than one hundred and ninety degrees of frost, when man and beast must necessarily perish.

The English papers have, no doubt, made you acquainted with a great calamity which has lately occurred at Petersburg, in the destruction of the magnificent Winter Palace by fire, on the night of the 29th of December. Various reports have been spread as to the cause of this misfortune. It has been hinted that it was not altogether accidental, and that the authors of the calamity are conspirators against the government. All such rumours, however, appear to be utterly groundless, and it seems that the fire undoubtedly originated in want of precaution on the part of those who were charged with the care of the stoves; some of which were out of order, so as to ignite the adjoining wood-work. This it is supposed had been smouldering for a day or two; and it is even said that a smell of burning had been noticed, and yet that no precautions were taken. Be this as it may, the fire broke out on the night which I have mentioned, while the Emperor and Empress with their grown-up children were at the theatre where Taglioni was dancing. A messenger was immediately sent to the Emperor, who came away without alarming the Empress, under the pretence that a courier had arrived with despatches for his own hand.

He found that the young Grand Dukes had been already taken out of the Palace and placed in a carriage to await his directions; and that the valuable Crown jewels had also been removed to a place of security. His Majesty therefore proceeded at once to his own private apartments in the burning palace, and, with the assistance of his valet-de-chambre, packed up and secured his private papers. Having completed this important task, he sent to inform the Empress of the disaster.



She immediately came to the palace, and directed the removal from her own apartments of those articles which she prized most, first personally ascertaining the safety of all the ladies attached to the court, some of whom were rescued not without difficulty. She then went to the house of Count Nesselrode, on the opposite side of the Imperial Place or Square, and established herself at one of the windows, where she remained for two hours watching the progress of the fire, which gained ground rapidly. Owing to the intense frost (twenty-six or twenty-seven degrees of Reaumur), the engines were useless, for want of water. The flames continued to rage all night, and the loss is estimated at more than a million of pounds sterling. A considerable part of the magnificent furniture was saved, together with most of the pictures and valuable curiosities. More might have been rescued from the fire, but, as it spread, the Emperor forbade all further exertions, on account of the danger. The soldiers, however, who were engaged in removing the furniture, were so eager, that it was difficult to restrain them, and even the Emperor himself, as it is said, had some trouble in enforcing obedience when he commanded them to desist. The following anecdote\* is told of his Majesty's presence of mind on the occasion. Some soldiers were busily employed in taking down a magnificent mirror which stood opposite to the door, when the Emperor, who was in the adjoining room, saw that the ceiling was cracking over the heads of the men. He called to them to desist and come away instantly, but they were so eagerly engaged in their work that they did not immediately obey, and the Emperor, perceiving that no time was to be lost, threw his opera-glass, with all his force, at the mirror, and broke it in the middle. The soldiers, perceiving it to be spoiled, though they scarcely knew how, gave themselves no further trouble about it, and left the room, and the ceiling fell in a few minutes afterwards. I, myself, think his Majesty is quite as likely to have aimed at the men's heads as at the mirror, by way of effectually exciting their attention. Whether I am right in my conjecture,

\* I find that this anecdote is given by Lord Londonderry in his account of his visit to Petersburg and Moscow; I have, however, not thought it worth while to expunge it from my letter, since I heard it at the time, and on authority which I could not doubt.

or whether the more courtly version of the story is true, the Emperor undoubtedly appears to have saved the lives of the party by the expedient which he adopted. The palace was inhabited by fifteen or sixteen hundred souls, but I believe no lives were lost in the fire excepting those of four or five soldiers, who perished in the White Hall, from the roof falling in upon them.

Of those who are exposed to the severity of a Russian winter, the washerwomen always appear to me the most deserving of pity. They may be seen daily in numbers washing clothes, notwithstanding the bitter cold, at holes cut in the ice of the river, rinsing the linen in the water, and then laying it on the ice and striking it with a wooden beetle instead of wringing it. The linen is taken down to the river and conveyed home again on small sledges, which the women draw after them. These women, and indeed the female peasants in general, are dressed in the winter almost like the men, in sheepskin coats and high boots reaching to the knee, with their heads wrapped up in handkerchiefs. The hands of the washerwomen are necessarily undefended, and it surprises me that they can preserve the use of them, when they are wet and then exposed to the intense frost. The sentinels at this season, in addition to their great-coats, are provided with large sheepskin pelisses or wrappers, which cover them completely. They have also warm gloves and goloshes lined with fur; and they wear under the shako cloth skull-caps, protecting the ears and the back of the head and neck.

Since Christmas we have had a rapid succession of assemblies, balls, and parties of various kinds; and coachmen and horses have been forced to remain out of doors in the cold, while their masters and mistresses were amusing themselves in warm rooms within. The horses, however, are secured from harm by their own hardy nature and by their long rough coats; while the drivers are so well wrapped up in furs and sheepskins, as almost to bid defiance to the frost. Nevertheless in Petersburg and Moscow \* all places of public amusement

\* In these capitals during the winter large fires are lighted at night in the public places near the theatres and palaces, with screens from the wind, for the benefit of the coachmen and servants waiting with carriages.

are closed, from humanity to man and beast, when the cold reaches an extreme point; and Court festivities are, under the same circumstances, postponed.

It is not the fashion at Tamboff for entertainers to issue cards of invitation, or to engage their guests long beforehand. Instead of this, a lady who intends to give a ball or party usually goes round the town making calls, and inviting the ladies in person for the next day or the next but one; leaving a card or message for those whom she does not find at home. Her husband follows her in her circuit at a short interval to invite the gentlemen, who would not be pleased were this ceremony omitted. These calls sometimes begin as early as nine o'clock in the morning, and we often find cards on the breakfast-table which have been left before we were dressed.

About Christmas and the New Year the people appear to spend most of their time in hurrying from house to house, and paying a flying visit or leaving a card; as custom requires that on one, if not both, of these occasions they should take the trouble of calling on all their acquaintances with congratulations. On Christmas-day my brother-in-law was too unwell to admit visitors, and eighty-two cards were left at his house in the course of the morning. On New Year's day he devoted himself to the task of politeness in return; and he tells me that before he came home he had called at fifty houses. At Odessa, instead of making these calls in person, they put advertisements in the newspaper to the effect that Mr. A. pays his respects to Messrs. B., C., D., and the rest of the alphabet.

The ladies are in general very well dressed *when they appear in public*.\* Indeed their toilettes must be the source of no inconsiderable expense, since it seems to be held necessary that a lady should not appear in the same dress at two balls in the course of the winter. In a society such as that of Tamboff, no one can hope to infringe this rule without instant detection on the part of her fair friends. Ladies of moderate fortune in Russia possess, generally speaking, more jewels than Eng-

\* Some of them do not equally deserve to be commended for personal neatness when unadorned for society.

lish women in similar circumstances. A valuable shawl, and diamonds to a certain amount, are considered indispensable requisites in the list of marriage presents from every husband to his bride.\*

At evening parties, trays loaded with bonbons, apples, grapes, and sweetmeats, are handed round in great abundance, and ices are also served in profusion: but ladies ornamented with diamonds do not appear to advantage in society when munching unpeeled apples; nor does it quite accord with the dignity of generals, decorated with stars, to stuff their pockets with bonbons, and carry them away; both of which practices prevail. No plates accompany these refreshments, and, therefore, the floor of the room is quickly strewed with the papers in which the bonbons have been wrapped; while apple-cores and grape-skins are thrown without compunction under the chairs. The sweetmeats are brought in numerous large saucers, but with only two or three spoons on the tray; a guest being expected, after using a spoon, to restore it to the saucer for the benefit of his neighbour. In some houses, instead of laying cloths for supper, the plates are set down on the naked card-tables, scrawled all over with chalk; from the Russian fashion, which I have mentioned, of marking in this manner the state of the game. The suppers are very elaborate and good, but they seldom make their appearance till two o'clock in the morning, though we dine at three in the afternoon. The fact is that Russians have a habit of quitting the house where they are entertained the moment they rise from table, whether it be late or early; and the late supper is arranged with the hospitable intention of detaining the guests as long as possible.

I observe that in this society the young married women seem to possess greater attractions than the maidens. Indeed, Russian notions impose upon the latter so much restraint, that it sometimes appears difficult to keep up a conversation with them, as they can hardly be induced to take their fair share; and, I believe, the unmarried men are absolutely afraid of them. Perhaps if a gentleman were to pay a young lady the attentions which, according to our ideas, ordinary politeness would

\* Indian shawls and diamond ornaments were to be purchased in the shops at Tamboff. I inquired in vain for a nail-brush.

exact, he might here be expected to proceed further, and to offer his hand. The young ladies usually stand huddled together in the rooms in knots, and they are seated at supper like a set of children, at a separate table; without a single partner to enliven them. The young men naturally look equally dull in their state of isolation.

A pleasant and animated conversation is certainly more rare and more difficult to maintain in Russia than it is in England. The Censorship, as I have already remarked, places a great restraint upon literature; and there are few subjects to talk about of general interest, since political topics are entirely banished. No one likes, in general society, to hazard the most indifferent remark on any act of the Government, which is said, I believe with much truth, to have active spies among every class and in every quarter. Besides these unknown spies, there are, in every town, officers of *gendarmes*, or, as they are often called, of *the secret police*; part of whose duty avowedly is to report to St. Petersburg all that is passing around them, even, as I am told, to the merest gossip. Count Benkendorf is at the head of this department; and all persons unite in declaring that nothing could render so odious a system tolerable but the manner in which it is organised by its present Chief, who has succeeded in acquiring much popularity notwithstanding the unpleasant nature of his office.

So strongly is the habit of prudent reserve imprinted on the minds of Russians that their natural curiosity and desire for information often seems to be stifled, and it is difficult to excite their interest in any public event. On the evening after the arrival of the post which brought intelligence of the Winter Palace having been burned, we happened to be at a small party, consisting of less than a dozen people; one of whom had received a letter from a friend at Petersburg, giving him an account of what had occurred. As no public papers had arrived that day, it would have been natural for this gentleman to impart his correspondent's information, and to tell us all he knew about an event of so much general interest. Instead of this however, small and private as the society was, it was merely mentioned in the room that a report had arrived of a serious fire at the palace, and no one ventured to enter at all

upon the subject.\* The fact, I suppose, was, that silence was the safe course, and that no one liked to be the first to bruit about the news of such a disaster. When the newspapers arrived, they merely stated in a short paragraph that the palace had unfortunately been destroyed by fire. They entered into no details, and they only made their account of the misfortune the vehicle for a little flattery of the Emperor and the Imperial family.

I will conclude my letter with an account which the Emperor's aide-de-camp, Colonel Boutourlin, lately gave us of a very singular occurrence which took place three years ago at Petersburg. Strange as the story appears, I am assured that it is undeniably true.

About the time of Christmas, masquerades are much in vogue in Russia, and even when an ordinary ball is given at this season, it is not unusual to place candles in the windows of the house as a well-understood signal that masks may enter without special invitation.

At the period to which this story refers, namely the Christmas of 1834, a ball was given at a house at Petersburg (the name of the owner was mentioned, but I have forgotten it), and the ordinary signal was displayed for the admission of masks. Several masks arrived in the course of the evening, staid but a short time, as is usual, and departed.

At length a party entered dressed as Chinese, and bearing on a palanquin a person whom they called their chief; saying that it was his fête-day. They set him down very respectfully in the middle of the room, and commenced dancing what they called their national dance around him. When this was concluded, they separated and mingled with the general company, speaking French fluently (the universal language at a Russian masquerade), and making themselves extremely agreeable. After a while they began gradually to disappear unnoticed, slipping out of the room one or two at a time. At last they were all gone, but their chief still remained

\* I have since been informed that the Emperor caused it to be understood at Petersburg that the subject of the fire was not agreeable to him, and that the less it was discussed in society, the better he should be pleased.

sitting motionless in dignified silence in his palanquin in the middle of the room. The ball began to thin, and the attention of those who remained was wholly drawn to the silent figure of the Chinese mask.

The master of the house at length went up to him, and told him that his companions were all gone; politely begging him at the same time to take off his mask, that he and his guests might know to whom they were indebted for all the pleasure which the exhibition had afforded them. The Chinaman, however, gave no reply by word or sign, and a feeling of uneasy curiosity gradually drew around him the guests who remained in the ball-room. He still took no notice of all that was passing around him, and the master of the house at length, with his own hand, took off the mask, and discovered to the horrified by-standers the face of a corpse.

The police were immediately sent for, and on a surgical examination of the body it appeared to be that of a man who had been strangled a few hours before. Nothing could be discovered either at the time or afterwards which could lead to the identifying of the dead man, or to the discovery of the actors in this extraordinary scene, and no clue has ever been obtained. It was found on inquiry, that they arrived at the house where they deposited the dead body in a handsome equipage with masked servants.

If this story be true, and Colonel Boutourlin spoke of it as a well-known and undoubted fact, an assurance which I have since heard confirmed on good authority, the method by which the murderers disposed of the remains of their victim is one of the most unaccountable which was ever planned or executed by human ingenuity. It is surmised to have been, in some way or other, the dénouement of a gambling transaction.

It does not perhaps argue much acuteness in the detective powers of the police that the body should never have been identified; but the proper use of the proper amount of roubles may very possibly have suppressed inconvenient discoveries.

## LETTER XVIII.

The pleasures of sledging rather exaggerated — A vasok — A kibitka — Cheapness of travelling — A fellow-countryman — An adventure which befell him at Moscow — Character of sledge-drivers — A General and a jeweller — A Polish swindler of the fair sex.

Tamboff, February 2nd, 1838.

THE delights of sledging have always been cried up to me in the most exalted terms since I have been in this country. No doubt it is an excellent mode of travelling, when the snow is in a good state, and when the cold is not too intense; since the pace is usually very rapid, and the risk of dangerous roads is avoided. I am, however, unable to appreciate the luxury, in which a Russian finds so much enjoyment, of driving about for amusement in the little sledges which are used in towns. Were there no other objection to this indolent pleasure, the coachman himself is a great hindrance to one's enjoyment, as he is too near to be agreeable, and his person entirely obstructs the view. Moreover the horse, and especially the outrigger, if there are two, sends up a perpetual shower of snow from his hoofs, which often compels one to close one's eyes. Still it must be owned that one of these sledges, with a well-dressed coachman to drive it, and a fine horse in the shafts, is a very pretty little equipage. The sledge is made of rosewood, mahogany, or some other handsome wood, well varnished, and neatly relieved by a little gilding; the apron being of cloth lined and edged with bearskin. The coachman wears a cloth caftan, edged with fur, and fastened round his waist by a gay-coloured sash. On his head he has a warm cap of crimson or blue velvet, with a fur band; while an ample and handsome beard is an essential ornament to his face. Sledges for family parties are made capacious enough to hold ten or a dozen people, being fitted like carriages with a pole, and drawn by four or even six horses. A close carriage, placed on runners instead of wheels, is



called a *vasok*. It is a very convenient vehicle for town use, and it is preferred by many people for winter travelling on account of its warmth. A *vasok* adapted for this purpose has no springs; but it is not considered so safe for a journey when the roads are bad, and the snow is worn into holes, as the ordinary winter vehicle called a *kibitka*. Kibitkas are of various kinds, according to the taste or means of the owner; the best sort being a species of *calèche*, warmly fitted up, and placed on runners. The *kibitka* is closed with leather curtains instead of glass; and on each side near the ground projects a strong wooden elbow, so that the vehicle cannot easily be upset; the elbow being a necessary appendage for this purpose to all sledges intended for country use. The *kibitka* has shafts, and is driven *tröika*; that is, with three horses abreast. The traveller inside is able either to sit up or to lie down, stretching himself out as if he were in bed, the vehicle being built long for this purpose. The price of a first-rate *kibitka* is from twenty to five-and-twenty pounds.

The winter-roads in Russia were never known to be better than this year up to the present time, since the frost has been hard, and the quantity of snow on the ground moderate, both of which are necessary conditions for the comfort of the traveller.

Russian travelling is not very expensive, even to strangers; but for those who know how to make a bargain its cheapness is almost fabulous. A gentleman who arrived here a short time ago on business from Kalouga, a distance of four hundred versts, or about three hundred miles, told us that instead of taking post-horses he had hired an *istvostchik* with a very good *kibitka* and three horses, for the period of his absence from home, at the rate of twenty-five roubles, or about a guinea, a week, the man undertaking to feed himself and his horses. On these terms the gentleman said that he was driven on his journey sixty miles a-day; that is to say, that he performed the whole distance in five days. Some of the Russian breeds of horses are wonderfully hardy and enduring; and I am told they will travel, especially in winter when the draught is light, sixty, eighty, and even a hundred versts, without more than a bait, and without being the worse for their exertions.

I have continued throughout the winter to take exercise on foot whenever I have been able to go out of doors, but walking is very fatiguing and disagreeable, owing to the slippery state of the footpath, and the necessary impediments of a heavy cloak and goloshes lined with fur. Few Russians like to use their feet when they can find any other mode of conveyance, and I should not have had any companion in my walks, had I not been fortunate enough to meet with a countryman who has been four years in Russia, and who was established here not long ago as tutor in the family of General A—. Mr. R— and I have very often walked together, and we have enjoyed much pleasure in meeting with one another in this remote place, in talking together, and in comparing the observations which we have each made on the country.

Mr. R— tells me that two years ago at Moscow he met with an adventure which proved sufficiently serious, while it very nearly cost him his life. I believe I have already told you that there are in all considerable towns in Russia licensed *istvostchiks*, as they are called, who stand in the streets with *droschkas* for hire in summer, and sledges in winter. For the purpose of identification these men wear, attached to their necks, a tin plate with a number stamped on it. They do not in general bear a very high character, and in large towns it is not considered altogether safe at night to take an unknown *istvostchik* in the street, especially in the winter. Robberies and murders have occasionally been perpetrated by these men, and a person wrapped up in a cloak is in a very defenceless position against an unexpected attack.

To return to my friend's story: he came one night out of a coffee-house at Moscow, stepped into a hack sledge, of which there were two or three waiting at the door, and directed the *istvostchik* to drive him to his lodgings. Unfortunately he neglected to make the porter of the house take down the number of the driver, who in that case would have known that he would be made responsible by the police for the safety of his fare, neither did he notice the man's number as he drove along. The night was bitterly cold, and R— was wrapped up in a fur pelisse with the collar put up round his head. Presently, as he was gliding quietly along, something was thrown over his head

from behind, and he was dragged out upon his back on the snow. Happily, however, the noose slipped off his neck when he fell, and he instantly got on his legs and saw an *istvostchik* in a sledge driving rapidly away. His own *istvostchik* sat quite still, and persuaded him that the other man was drunk, it being a fête-day, and that his attack was only intended as a joke. R— was not altogether satisfied with this explanation of the matter, but being in a lonely part of the town, and a good way from home, he at length got into his sledge again, having no suspicion that his own driver was a party to the attack, if a serious one had been intended. He, however, put down the collar of his pelisse, and kept looking over his shoulder to see that no one came up behind. While his attention was thus occupied, his driver turned suddenly into a dark street, nearly upsetting the sledge against the post at the corner, and almost at the same moment a rope was suddenly thrown over Mr. R—'s neck from the front, and he was a second time dragged out upon the snow. Before he could rise, three *istvostchiks* were upon him, who began stamping on his breast, and rifling his pockets. On his calling out for the police, one of the men put his hand inside the rope around his neck, and nearly strangled him by twisting it, while another thrust a hand into his mouth. A severe bite made him quickly withdraw it, and R— at the same time fortunately succeeded in slipping the rope off his neck; otherwise he would undoubtedly have been murdered. He was much hurt and nearly stunned, and the scoundrels\* at length left him for dead, finishing their ill treatment with two or three stamps upon the breast. They robbed him of a gold watch and chain and two or three hundred roubles; and, what was even worse, they took away his pelisse, cap, and gloves. Thus exposed, he could not possibly have survived long, in twenty-seven degrees of frost. Happily, however, he was able to rise, though with difficulty, when he

\* When we were afterwards at Moscow, on returning one night to our hotel, we found the porter in the act of expelling one of these *istvostchiks*, and literally kicking him out of the house. Our *liquis de place* observed that the servant was but doing his duty, for that these fellows were in general such rascals, that, as he expressed himself, "Poor as I am, I would not trust myself in one of their sledges at night, unless I knew something of the driver, for I should be almost sure to be robbed."

saw the three scoundrels driving away as fast as they could in their sledges. He tied a handkerchief round his head, and, knowing where he was, he made the best of his way to his lodgings, which happened to be not far off.

He immediately sent for a surgeon, but it was a period of six weeks before he recovered the effects of his ill-treatment, his face having been severely bruised, and his eyes almost forced out of his head. Police officers came in the morning to receive his account of the attack made upon him, and a week afterwards, when he was able to leave the house, the master of police sent for him, and made three hundred *istvostchiks* pass in review before him. Among so large a number he was unable positively to identify the culprits, and though five were detained upon suspicion, and further inquiries were made, nothing was eventually discovered, and I need not add that poor R— never recovered any of his property. His pelisse had cost eight hundred roubles, so that, with the watch and chain, and the money which was stolen, his loss must have amounted to sixty or seventy pounds, in addition to the personal injuries he had sustained. He found afterwards that the attack was premeditated, and that it was intended, not for himself, but for another gentleman, who frequented the same coffee-house, and who was known to carry habitually a considerable sum of money in his pocket.\* The possibility of such an outrage being perpetrated with impunity in the heart of the city, and on a bright moonlight night, a circumstance which I omitted before to mention, does not say much for the vigilance with which the streets of Moscow are watched at night.†

The following anecdotes will show that the acuteness of the police is sometimes pretty severely taxed.

A person, dressed in the uniform of a General, entered the shop of a jeweller at Moscow, and asked to see some of his most valuable diamond rings; saying that he wanted one as

\* Garrotting was, I believe, when these Letters were written, a crime unknown in London.

† The number of dark lanes with blank walls, and the lonely character of the streets of Moscow, render an efficient patrol extremely requisite, and at the same time, from the vast extent of the city, very difficult to establish. The lighting of the streets is disgracefully bad, except, as I am informed, when the Emperor is present.

a present for a lady to whom he was going to be married. He was immediately shown a number of very costly and splendid rings, which he examined attentively, seeming much puzzled in his choice. While this was going on, a beggar opened the shop-door, and the jeweller told him to go away; but the General, observing, in a compassionate tone, that he chanced to have a few copecks in his pocket, beckoned the man to him and dropped them into his hat. The beggar began with the usual whine of the class to thank him, but the General cut him short very gruffly and bade the man be off. He then resumed his examination of the rings, and at last said that they were all so handsome that he could not make up his mind which to select, but that he must bring the lady to choose for herself. The jeweller, as he replaced the box, counting over the rings, perceived that one was missing. He asked the General if he had put one in his pocket by mistake. This was denied, but after some further search the tradesman at last taxed his customer with having stolen a ring. The General was highly indignant at the charge, but the jeweller persisted, saying that he should send for the police to search him; which at last he actually did, though warned by his Excellency of the danger of making a groundless accusation against a man of his rank.

The General was searched, but the ring was not found, and it was now his turn to become the accuser, by charging the shopkeeper with a false attack upon his character. In the end this affair cost the poor jeweller two or three thousand roubles before it was compromised; besides which he lost a ring worth perhaps as much more. The person whom he was accused of defaming was in truth no impostor as regarded his rank, but was really a General, though his conduct, on this occasion, was somewhat "unbecoming an officer and a gentleman." He had stolen the ring, though it was not about his person when he was searched, as he had dropped it with the copecks into the hat of his confederate, the pretended beggar.

The following story records the prowess of a Polish lady, who not long ago honoured Moscow with her residence, and who seems to have been a most accomplished swindler. It is

said that by the exercise of her talents in this way she realised, in the course of one year, between three and four thousand pounds; all of which she spent in the same period, economy not being one of her virtues. "Light come, light gone," says the adage. This lady on one occasion, being in the occupation of a house at Moscow, obtained on credit a quantity of firewood, to the value of five hundred roubles. Of the best of this she had a considerable quantity piled in her ante-room, apparently for use. She had indeed a use for it, though she did not intend it for the fire, as you will see. She sent for a wholesale dealer, not her creditor, as may be supposed, and asked him if he would like to purchase some wood, as she had an estate about forty versts from Moscow, on which she meant to cut down a large quantity. The man said that he should have no objection to become the purchaser of all she had for sale, if they could agree about the price. "Well," said she, "you had better go down to my property and look at the wood as it stands." "I will go to-morrow," said the tradesman, "but I should like first to know whether we are likely to come to terms."

The lady then named the acreage which she meant to clear, and, describing the wood as of most excellent quality, she said that the price she expected was forty thousand roubles. "Well," said the tradesman, "that is rather too much, but, if I find that the article answers your description, I shall not mind offering something like five-and-thirty thousand." The lady said that, as she wanted a sum of money, she was not inclined to dispute about a trifle, though the price she at first named was little enough. She, however, pressed strongly for an immediate conclusion to the business, and offered to take the tradesman in her carriage that evening down into the country to see the wood. He declared that it was impossible for him to leave home at that moment, but that he would go the next day; to which the lady replied that she could not wait, and that she must try to deal with some one else. At length the man, considering, from the terms proposed and the description he had received of the wood, that the purchase was likely to turn out extremely profitable, said that, as they were so nearly agreed, he would conclude the bargain at once, going

down the following day to satisfy himself and to examine the wood, and he begged the lady, in the mean time, to take, as is usual, some hand-money as an earnest.. To this proposal she refused to accede, insisting that the man should accompany her into the country that evening if he intended to deal with her.

The conversation went on in this manner for some time, the tradesman assuring her that he could not leave his business that day, and the lady urging the point, till at length a happy idea appeared to strike her. "After all," said she, "perhaps it is unnecessary for you to go down at once to my estate, for you can judge of the wood by this sample in the ante-room; though it is but some inferior stuff which I have been cutting for my present use."

The dealer was delighted with the specimen she pointed out; and the bulk of the wood for sale being, as he was assured, of very much better quality than what was shown him, he determined not to let so good a bargain slip. He said, therefore, that he felt quite satisfied, and would close at once with the lady's offer if she would accept hand-money, according to the Russian custom, and would consider the business as settled. "No," said she, "I am in need of money certainly, and that is the reason why I take so low a price for my wood, but the sum I want is a considerable one, and two or three hundred roubles will be of no use to me." "Well, madam," said the dealer, "I shall not be easy unless the bargain is struck, so pray take this on account," handing her notes to the amount of six thousand roubles. The money was with some difficulty received, and the tradesman departed well satisfied. Another dealer was immediately sent for, who bought for three hundred roubles ready money the unpaid-for stock of wood which had played so useful a part; and the lady lost no time in shifting her quarters.

Long before this affair the police had been in search of her for similar exploits, and at length, a superior officer having discovered her residence, determined that she should not escape, and went himself with the constables to apprehend her. He was received at the door of the house by a maid-servant, who said her mistress was at home, begging the gentleman to walk in. The police-officer desired his men to wait at the door, and

was himself shown into a room, where he waited for some time, but no lady made her appearance. Growing suspicious, he determined to search the house at once; but, on reaching the door of the room, he found himself locked in. On making this discovery, he kicked and called loudly, until not only his own assistants but some of the lodgers in the house came to see what was the matter. As soon as the officer was released from durance, he began to inquire for Madame ——, the woman of whom he was in search. “Why,” said the people of the house, “did not you see her? She spoke to you herself at the door, and showed you into this very room.” Whether Madame —— has ever been brought up at the Moscow Bow Street, or whether she is still *wanted*, I have not heard.



## LETTER XIX.

The carnival — *Bleenies* — Ice-hills — A sledge promenade — A masquerade — A Russian dance — A public dinner.

Tamboff, February 24th, 1838.

WE are now arrived nearly at the conclusion of the carnival, which ends to-morrow (Sunday) at midnight, Lent in the Greek church beginning, not on Ash-Wednesday, but on the previous Monday. Indeed, the carnival-week itself is, strictly speaking, a commencement of the fast, or at least a preparation for it; the use of meat being forbidden at this time, though eggs, milk, and butter are allowed.\* This, however, is a distinction seldom or never observed by the higher classes, who generally content themselves with abstaining from animal food during a single week of Lent, usually the first or the last. The traders and peasants are, as I have already told you, extremely rigid in observing this and all the other rules of the Greek church. One of the great amusements of the carnival is eating *bleenies*; a *bleeny* being a kind of cake somewhat like an English crumpet or a thick pancake, and eaten with butter. The carnival is the season in which ice-hills are chiefly in use in Russia, but unfortunately none on a considerable scale have been erected here this winter, and the only specimen I have seen is a very small one made in the court-yard of a private house for the amusement of the children. For the three last days, as well as on Sunday, there have been grand promenades in the principal street, at which nearly all the inhabitants of the town have appeared, parading up and down in sledges of every description, at a foot's-pace, in two rows like the lines of carriages in Hyde-park. Order is maintained by a number of policemen, aided by a few mounted gendarmes, and the middle space between the two ranks is

\* The week before Lent is called *butter-week* in Russ.

reserved for sledges which have poles instead of shafts, these being dangerous in the close ranks, as, in the case of a sudden stoppage, the point of the pole may run, not against a back panel, but against the back of the person in the next sledge.

We ourselves have joined the procession more than once with a large party, in a sledge holding ten or twelve people, and drawn by four horses, and, our pole procuring for us admission to the open centre-space, we have been able to drive rapidly up and down the street, so as to pass in review the two lines of sledges on either side. The weather during the whole week has been most beautiful—a hard frost and a bright sun. The Tamboff promenaders, however, instead of enjoying the fine and pleasant portion of the day, do not begin to appear till about four o'clock, when the sun is near the horizon. By five o'clock the street is crowded, and the sledgers continue patiently to glide up and down till nearly seven. This fashion arises, I presume, from the Russian habit of wasting two or three hours of the short daylight in a siesta after an early dinner. The lower orders consider it very unlucky not to appear in a sledge at the promenade once at least during the carnival; and they deem it equally unlucky not to get drunk in the course of the week. There are, however, few among them who run any risk on the ground of sobriety. During the last two days happy has been the master who has had a cook sober enough to dress his dinner, or a servant steady enough to place it on the table.

On Thursday there was a public assembly, the last of the season, and yesterday there was a masquerade for the servants and the lower class of tradesmen. We went with some friends into the gallery to witness the scene, and the decorum, and even politeness, which prevailed was quite as great as among the more fashionable society which had appeared in the same room the night before. The ladies' maids were dressed in imitation of their mistresses, contrary to their usual custom, and for the most part they wore neither mask nor fancy dress. The men were equipped in general in various grotesque costumes, being disguised by veils placed over their faces instead of masks; the veils being thrown off as the wearers became heated with dancing. Waltzes, quadrilles, and Polonaises were executed with tolerable success, but the Russian dance,

which was frequently repeated, was the great attraction of the evening. This is performed by two persons at a time, and is a sort of pantomime representing a courtship. The partners are placed opposite to one another about seven or eight feet apart. The gentleman first advances with many graceful and winning steps to his fair vis-à-vis, who remains in her place. He then figures in various attractive attitudes before her, but in vain, as she turns brusquely round and rejects him, upon which he finally retires. It is now the lady's turn to make similar advances, which are received in like manner with demonstrations of scorn. This alternate advance and retreat is carried on for some time; the talent of the performers consisting in the coquetry displayed on both sides, and in the grace and variety of their movements. At last, the lady, instead of rejecting her suitor, deigns to accept his attentions, and to receive the kiss which concludes the dance.

Such is the Russian dance, but yesterday I only saw it executed correctly once; the performers on the occasion being a masked man and a very pretty girl dressed in the Russian costume, who both played their parts extremely well. With the exception of this one instance, the performers were all men, and the dance in each case became a caricature and a trial of skill and activity between the two partners, which could invent the most extraordinary and grotesque steps and attitudes, and which could keep up longest the violent exertion of this amusement.

A farewell dinner was yesterday given by the nobility of the province of Tamboff to the ex-Governor on his departure. I was favoured with an invitation, and was glad of the opportunity of witnessing a public dinner in this country. About seventy gentlemen were assembled on the occasion; the tables being laid so as to form three sides of an oblong. At four o'clock the ex-Governor arrived, and was received by the principal people in the room; a military band, which was stationed in the gallery, striking up a national air as he entered. We sat down to dinner almost immediately, the guest of the day being placed in the centre of the cross-table. He was supported on his right hand by my brother-in-law, who, being Marshal, officiated

as President; and on his left by two Generals, Oushakoff\* and Arapoff; I sat opposite to these gentlemen. The dinner was very good, all the best cooks in the town having contributed their services, without, as the event proved, "spoiling the broth." Towards the conclusion of dinner we stood up and drank the Emperor's health in champagne, the wine always used for toasts in Russia. The band played "God save the King," the glasses were replenished, and the President then gave the health of the ex-Governor without speech or comment. We again rose to do honour to the toast, and the compliment was acknowledged in a few words. General Oushakoff's health was next drunk with congratulations on a new Order which he had lately received. He briefly returned thanks, and, dinner being by this time brought to a close, we rose from table, and coffee was handed round the room, where we stood conversing in groups. The ex-Governor soon after made his bow and took his leave, but not till the champagne had once more circulated as a stirrup-cup to wish him a safe journey to Petersburg.

A public dinner in England is, as we all know, generally arranged for the purpose of allowing some person or persons an opportunity of making speeches, and expressing opinions on public matters: but this can never be the case in Russia, where no one is permitted to discuss political topics. Under these circumstances the few words in which the toasts were yesterday proposed and responded to were far preferable to long and fulsome eulogies of the gentlemen to whom the compliment of drinking their healths was paid; followed by equally tedious and equally sincere assurances of deep feeling and boundless gratitude in return.

\* His name is now familiar to English ears, from the command he held in the Crimean campaign of 1855.

## LETTER XX.

Intention of leaving Tamboff—State of the weather—Expedition to Bonderry—*Ouchabas*—Night-travelling on a Steppe—Losing the way—A cloth manufactory in a lady's hands—Return to Tamboff.

Tamboff, March 1st, 1838.

THIS will, I think, be my last letter from Tamboff, for we have already dispatched a great part of our luggage by a carrier, and we mean to set out for Moscow ourselves in a few days. Indeed, from the present state of the weather, it seems that we have no time to lose,\* for the frost is giving way, and, if the thaw continues, the ice on the rivers will become unsafe, and the winter roads be altogether spoiled. Indeed, I am afraid that they will at any rate be very indifferent, as a good deal of snow has fallen lately, and the weather has become mild, the thermometer having been above the freezing-point both yesterday and to-day. Until very lately the roads have been remarkably good this winter for travelling, owing to the severity of the frost, and the comparatively small quantity of snow on the ground. It has now, however, become very deep in this part of the country, and the surface is doubtless much cut up by the incessant traffic of the *arbozes*. I have already had a little specimen of a winter journey, in an expedition which I made a few days ago with General A—and Mr. R—, the English gentleman who, as I have already told you, is residing in his house. The General was setting off on a long journey, intending on his way to visit a large cloth manufactory belonging to a widowed sister, which he superintends in her absence; and he kindly proposed to R—and myself to accompany him so far on his road, sleeping as he meant to do himself at his sister's house, called Bonderry, between fifty and sixty versts hence, and returning home the next

\* This proved a groundless alarm, as the frost returned with great severity, and lasted till the 10th of April.

day, while he proceeded on his journey. We accepted the invitation, and set off in a heavy fall of snow, about four o'clock on Sunday evening, Monday being a day on which a Russian will seldom, if he can avoid it, commence a journey. The General and I travelled in a *kibitka*, a low vehicle with a hood which I have already described to you; and R— followed close behind us in a large open sledge, extremely comfortable and well built, and in which we both returned home the next day. The first part of the road was pronounced on the whole to be not amiss, though we met with some tolerably deep holes, or *ouchatas*, as they are termed. Each vehicle had three horses, and we performed a stage of three-and-thirty versts, nearly five-and-twenty miles, in two hours and five minutes, our shaft horse trotting the whole way. When we proceeded, after changing horses, we found the road much worse; and occasionally, when travelling at a fast pace, we were thrown so decidedly on our beam-ends, that until I became somewhat used to the thing I thought it impossible that the *kibitka* could right itself again. This, however, it always did, thanks to its projecting elbow.

The night became exceedingly dark; the last ten versts of our journey lay across an open steppe; and the snow, which had now been falling heavily for some hours, had completely obliterated the discoloured line which would otherwise have marked the road, which was now as white as the rest of the plain. It was not, therefore, surprising that in a few minutes we found, from the horses sinking up to their knees in the soft snow, that we were off the beaten track, while we did not even know whether it lay to the right or to the left. The servants and drivers were now obliged to get down, and to walk about, stamping with their feet, to find the hard line of road. It was a good while before they succeeded in their search, and we had quite time enough to meditate on the prospect of passing the night where we were, an event which seemed by no means improbable. At length, however, the people hit on the beaten track, which was not in reality many yards from us, and we were once more in motion; one of the men walking before us for some distance to feel the way. We did not again lose our road, and, the direction of the wind

having been observed, to prevent the chance of our unwittingly turning back and retracing our steps, we at length had the satisfaction of seeing the lights of the village to which we were going. Soon afterwards we found ourselves comfortably installed in Madame L—'s house, which was large and handsome, and where everything was prepared for our reception.

The following morning we went with the General over a great part of the manufactory, which is established for the supply of soldiers' cloth. It is one of the largest establishments of the kind in Russia, the number of persons employed amounting to nearly three thousand. There is a Frenchman at the head of the concern; but Madame L—, the proprietress, superintends it herself when at home. This may seem rather an unusual undertaking for a woman; but in Russia, where nearly every landed proprietor is a manufacturer, ladies often exhibit a taste and a capacity for conducting business which is not often developed among our own countrywomen.

After going over the manufactory, which I need not describe, but which seemed well and systematically conducted, we had an early dinner; and I then took leave of my kind friend the General, and set off with Mr. R— on our return to Tamboff. The day was most disagreeable; we had a high wind, with a driving sleet; and nothing could be more dismal than our view as we crossed the steppe in which we had lost our road the night before. A flat waste, covered with snow, surrounded us on every side, the horizon being obscured by the falling sleet. As we approached the boundary of the plain, the trees and other objects which indistinctly presented themselves gave the idea of a shore for which we were steering across the sea. The road abounded in *ouchabas*, and our sledge pitched up and down, and from side to side, like a boat in rough water. At the same time our battered persons bore undeniable testimony to the hard solidity of the surface over which we were travelling. It grew dark before we reached Tamboff; and we missed our way more than once in a plain four or five miles wide which skirts the town. The lights, however, which were visible before us, marked our direction; and by *sometimes catching sight of a verst-post*, and sometimes of the black

railing of a bridge, of which there are several over hollow watercourses, our driver managed to steer across the waste, and to bring us safely to our journey's end. A kibitka is a very comfortable carriage to recline in, and the motion is highly agreeable at a rapid pace on a fair road; but the jolt, when the kibitka plunges through an *ouchaba*, will make the fire flash out of the eyes. I have seen quite enough in this little trip to convince me that a long journey at this moment will not be pleasant; for the best season for winter travelling is now past, and we must expect bad roads and changeable weather. We shall therefore be doubtless very happy when we can look back upon the nine hundred miles of snow which we must traverse between Tamboff and Petersburg. We do not mean to stay long among our friends at Moscow, for fear the winter should break up and detain us. Travelling at that moment is in every way inconvenient; and it is difficult, if not impossible, to cross the rivers during the floods produced by the melting of the snow in spring. We shall travel to Moscow in a kibitka, and we shall then hire a diligence to take us to Petersburg, whence I hope to date my next letter.



## LETTER XXI.

Arrival at St. Petersburg — Appearance of thaw at Tamboff — Departure — Increase of cold — The first halt — Motion of kибитка — A long stage — Journeying along rivers — Arrival at Moscow — A winter scene — Stay at Moscow — Character of the hotels — A winter-diligence — A snow-storm — Slow progress — Deep holes in the snow — Small quantity of snow further north — Prince Serge Galitzin — Visitors not announced in Russia — A party at Prince Serge's — The Prince of Georgia — The Cheremetieff and Galitzin hospitals at Moscow — Scanty population of that city.

St. Petersburg, March 27th, 1838.

You will perceive by the date of this letter that we have completed the journey which we were about to undertake when I last wrote; and you will be glad to find that we have made so long a stride on our way homewards; for, in point of time, Petersburg will be as near to England as to Tamboff when the navigation of the Gulf of Finland is open. This, however, will not be the case for some weeks to come. The Baltic steamboats will not begin to ply till the second week in May at the earliest.

We arrived here on Saturday last, having spent ten days in Moscow on our way; and before I give you any account of our journey, I may as well say, that, although Petersburg is now so full that it is difficult to meet with lodgings, we have been fortunate enough to engage an excellent set of rooms, clean and well-furnished, in one of the best situations in the town—the Little Million—at the Hôtel de la Bourse, kept by a Frenchman. Here we established ourselves yesterday, and, having also provided ourselves with a servant, we are comfortably settled for the remainder of our stay in this country.

In my last letter from Tamboff I told you that the state of the weather caused us some fear that the ice on the rivers might become unsafe, and the roads be unfit for sledge travelling. The thaw which excited our alarm continued for

two days after I wrote. On Saturday (the 3rd) Reaumur's thermometer stood six degrees above the freezing-point, about forty-five or forty-six degrees of Fahrenheit. The snow was melting fast, the streets were flowing with water, and the accounts which we received of the roads were such that we determined to risk no longer delay, but to set out the following night on our journey, instead of waiting till Tuesday, as we had previously fixed. We feared, indeed, that we had already postponed moving too long; but about half an hour after we had determined on this precipitate flight, a friend came in and said he had good news for us. He told us that the wind had just changed to the north, and that we might expect a return of frost. In fact, to our great delight, before we went to bed, the thermometer was below zero, and the snow was beginning to grow crisp again, and the following morning we had three degrees of cold. We did not however choose again to alter our plans or trust to the continuance of this favourable weather, so by the evening everything was ready for our departure.

The last moments of our stay do not tempt me to dwell upon them. We took leave of our countryman R—, whom we left with much regret in this distant spot, and we said farewell to some other friends. Finally we bade adieu to my brother and sister-in-law, whose kindness and hospitality had been unbounded during the long period which we had spent in their house; and who, on our departure, as during our stay, forgot nothing which could contribute to our comfort and accommodation. At length, well wrapped up, we arranged ourselves in the kibitka, and set out a quarter of an hour before midnight, to the great satisfaction of our Russian attendant, who would not willingly have commenced the journey on Monday. The road, as we expected, was in a very indifferent state; but the cold, which at first was not intense, increased rapidly, and therefore the snow became hard. Though its surface was much broken, we were able to proceed rapidly, and, by eight o'clock in the morning, we were about forty miles from Tamboff.

We had intended to breakfast at Kazloff, but our *istvostchik* drove us through the town without stopping, and we reached

no other place where any tolerable accommodation was to be found till five o'clock in the afternoon. Having travelled for seventeen hours without interruption, except to change horses, we were by this time somewhat chilled, very much cramped, and exceedingly hungry, as it was out of the question to eat in the kibitka, all our provisions being frozen hard. I had slept the greater part of the way in spite of our incessant tossing up and down, and from side to side, in the *ouchabas*. We had now travelled a hundred and seventy versts, and in the small town of Riask we enjoyed the luxury of entering clean and warm rooms, the same in which we had breakfasted on our way from Moscow in the autumn. Here we disencumbered ourselves of cloaks, warm boots, and caps, which we placed around the stove, while our basket, well stored by our kind friends at Tamboff with everything we could require on the road, was produced. A steaming *samovar* soon made its appearance; and hot tea and cold partridge pie were not the less agreeable for our seventeen hours' tossing over the snow. After remaining here about an hour and a half, and getting thoroughly warmed, we wrapped ourselves up once more, and, travelling all night, reached Riazan about eight o'clock on the Tuesday morning. At Riazan we got a comfortable breakfast at a tolerable inn. We had found the road very bad all night, and we constantly felt the sensation of being upset when the kibitka tilted sideways on the projecting elbow. After a time, however, we paid little attention to these occurrences, or even to the shock with which the vehicle righted itself after one of the runners had been lifted off the ground. Owing to the piercing wind which met us, we were forced to keep the leather veil, which closed up the front of the kibitka, almost always lowered, so that we travelled for the most part entirely in the dark, consoling ourselves by observing, whenever we looked forth, that nothing could be more dreary or dismal than the monotonous waste of snow which extended around us on every side as we journeyed along. From Riazan we were obliged to engage horses, our team being a *tröika*, to take us without changing all the way to Columnia, a distance of more than seventy miles. These horses were of the hardy Bashkir breed, which I mentioned in my account

of the horse-fair at Tamboff. They seemed equally insensible to fatigue and to cold, accomplishing their long stage with apparent ease in ten hours, including a stoppage to bait of two hours. During the bait they were not unharnessed or cleaned, but they stood to feed in an open shed, where their shaggy coats speedily became stiff with ice, as the moisture from their bodies froze. We left Riazan at ten in the morning, and we reached Columnia by eight in the evening. During the greater part of this day we travelled along the ice of the Occa, and of another river which runs into it. So long as we were on the ice the road was smooth and good, but the banks which we had to ascend and descend were steep and dangerous, and more than once we were nearly upset, owing to the carelessness of our *istvostchik*, who drove us down these slippery places in such a manner that the *kibitka* overpowered the horses and swung round sideways. Towards evening the frost became very intense, and when we reached Columnia we were told that there were then twenty-five degrees of cold by Reaumur, and this with a searching wind. We, however, stopped here no longer than was necessary to procure horses, which we did after a long delay. At the next station we supped, and we were obliged to proceed again with the same horses. The road, during these two stages, was worse than ever, and we got on very slowly, expecting constantly to be upset in spite of our previous experience, and it was ten o'clock on the Wednesday morning before we reached the second station; the horses which had brought us from Columnia being thoroughly jaded before they had finished their journey. The window-panes at the inn where we breakfasted were filled with writing, and I discovered among the various inscriptions a few lines in English. We had now the satisfaction of knowing that we were but twenty *versts* from the end of our journey, and, procuring fresh horses, we were driven rapidly along over an excellent road, and our passports were demanded at the gates of Moscow before one o'clock. We drove to the *Hôtel du Nord* in the *Tverskoi*, to which we had been recommended, and where we established ourselves. I cannot say much for the comfort or cleanliness of our apartments.

The only picturesque object which we saw during the whole

journey was a village through which we passed on the last morning, a little after six o'clock, just as the sun was rising. It being the time at which the peasants light their stoves, the smoke was curling in the bright clear air from nearly every house in the village; and the long straggling street happened to be filled by a large *arboze* (or string of carriers' sledges), the coats of the horses, and the long beards and fur caps of the drivers, being white with frost. The whole scene, which, lighted up by the rising sun, was really very striking, formed no bad picture of a winter morning in Russia, affording a characteristic view of the dwellings, costumes, and occupations of the people at this season of the year. We never suffered much from cold during our journey, intense as the frost was. Its most unpleasant effect was its congealing the breath in such a manner as to cover our fur collars with icicles. These became partially melted on touching the skin, so that it was very difficult to keep our faces from being constantly wet. We were always obliged to dry at the fire everything that had been within reach of the mouth, whenever we entered a house.

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I have little to say of our stay at Moscow, which only lasted ten days, during which time we both suffered much from colds and sore throats. The weather was very unpleasant, and the streets so encumbered with snow,\* that it was excessively disagreeable to drive about on account of the *ouchabas*, while it was out of the question to walk any distance, owing to the slippery and neglected state of the foot pavements. Our hotel, moreover, was so uncomfortable that we should hardly have remained as long as we did, had not M—'s family, with whom we spent most of our time, been in town. The hotels in Moscow are, I believe, celebrated for dirt and discomfort, and the Hôtel du Nord possesses these qualities in perfection.†

\* The streets of Moscow, at this time, from the sandy colour and loose consistency of the snow, had exactly the appearance of being thickly covered with moist sugar.

† We found too late that we ought to have gone to Mrs. Howard's hotel, which is said to be really clean and comfortable.

Once at Moscow we considered the remaining five hundred miles of our journey as nothing in comparison to the four hundred which we had already travelled, taking it for granted that the high-road between the two capitals was never in a very bad state, even in winter. We hired a diligence built for four passengers in addition to the conductor and driver, paying three hundred roubles (about twelve guineas) for the journey to Petersburg, with a guinea to the conductor on our arrival.

Comfortably arranged in this vehicle; a *vasok*, consisting of two coupés in one body, fixed on runners and without springs; we started from Moscow on Monday evening the 19th, about six o'clock, hoping to arrive at Petersburg on Thursday. Our expectations, however, of a good road were grievously disappointed. As soon as we got into the country we found a snow-storm raging in full force; while the road was so bad from the quantity of soft snow and from the drifts, that we were four hours and a half in performing a stage of not more than twenty miles. We stopped for supper at one of the Imperial inns which I described to you last summer. We intended to proceed immediately, but our conductor, who spoke French and German, came in presently to say that some travellers, who had just come up on their way to Moscow, gave such an account of the road, especially in one spot, where a diligence was already sticking fast, that he thought we had better remain where we were till morning, when, at least, if we got into a difficulty we might obtain assistance. We accordingly wrapped ourselves in our cloaks and lay down on sofas to wait for daylight; and the next day we had every reason to be satisfied with our prudence in not travelling in the dark. We were dragged along with much difficulty, and were nearly six hours performing a stage of less than three-and-twenty miles. I need not trouble you with a detail of every stage. Suffice it to say that we were obliged to stop again the second night for some hours, and that the journey the following day was worse than anything we had hitherto experienced.\* The *ouchabas* were deep and wide, and we were

\* Great numbers of men were employed along the road in filling up the holes and levelling the snow, and in some places the snow-plough was also

aware that a close carriage with luggage on the roof is more readily overturned than a kibitka. We more than once stuck fast in the bottom of a hole, and were obliged to get out before the horses could extricate the diligence. At other times, to avoid this difficulty, the *istvostchik* would put his horses full gallop at an *ouchaba*, in order that the impetus with which we descended one side of the ditch might carry us up the other side. We escaped all misfortunes, however, except aching bones, and arrived on Wednesday evening at Torjok, which we had expected to reach in twenty-four hours instead of forty-eight. From this spot we found that the road gradually improved, the quantity of snow diminishing as we proceeded northwards, so that all that night and all the next day we glided smoothly and rapidly along. Late on Thursday night we lay down to rest on sofas for about three hours, and, starting again before daylight, we reached Novogorod to breakfast. Here the snow, which farther south lay so deep, was hardly sufficient to cover the ground, and we had already met diligences travelling on wheels. During the remainder of our journey, a distance of more than two hundred versts, we experienced as much difficulty from scarcity of snow as we had in the earlier part of our journey from its superabundance. The road in some places was quite bare, or was covered only with a thin coating of ice, which in the day-time was thawed by the sun, so that we frequently stuck fast in the mud. At length, two stages from Petersburg, we found a diligence upon wheels, into which we transferred ourselves and our luggage, and, meeting with no further difficulties, arrived at Petersburg, as I have already told you, on Saturday evening; having been five days and nights, instead of three, upon the road. We drove to a private hotel, where we got temporary accommodation, and yesterday we moved into our present quarters.

When I wrote from Moscow in the autumn, I told you that it was yearly losing ground in point of society. The rich and fashionable, with all who seek amusement or promotion, flock to Petersburg; which, as the residence of the Court and the seat of Government, affords in these respects far higher attrac-

in use to remove the drifts; but the snow fell faster than it could be cleared away, and as soon as one hole was filled up another was formed.

tions than the ancient capital can hold out. I am assured that there is but one private house in Moscow which is at all kept up on a splendid scale, and that house I fortunately had an opportunity of visiting; although, from an accidental delay, my letter of introduction to its owner, Prince Serge Galitzin, did not arrive till two or three days before our departure from Moscow. It, however, immediately procured me the honour of a call from the Prince, accompanied by an invitation to a party; and he was kind enough, when I saw him, to express his regret at not hearing sooner of our arrival at Moscow; adding, that ~~he had expected~~ to see us in the autumn at his villa in the neighbourhood, when we passed through Moscow on our way from Yaroslav. This visit we had intended to pay, meaning to drive over in the morning and to return in the evening, but some accident had deprived us of the pleasure. Prince Serge, who has a large fortune, and who lives in a manner suited to it, is a specimen of modern refinement engrafted on the character of the old Russian *Grand Seigneur*, a race which is now become nearly extinct. The Russian nobles have seldom fortune enough to unite refinement with splendour and profusion; and they have generally learned to prefer the comfort of a moderate-sized well-furnished house, with a suitable establishment, to the cold and empty magnificence of their ancient overgrown palaces, and ill-appointed retinues of servants. The huge old house at Moscow is deserted for a modern residence at Petersburg.

I have probably told you, in some former letter, how little it is the custom in this country for servants to announce a visitor, and this to a stranger is rather embarrassing, as, on entering a crowded room, he does not know where to find the master or mistress of the house. I experienced this difficulty in some degree when I went to Prince Serge Galitzin's party. After walking through a long suite of empty saloons, I at last came to the apartments which were lighted up, and then I had to seek my host, whom I had never yet seen, in two large rooms filled with card-players, every one of whom was equally a stranger to me. The servants, of whom there were a great number in attendance, motioned me on, and pointed to the right; and when I had at length penetrated into the inner room, the



master of the house rose from one of the tables, and, coming forward, shook hands with me, and begged me to sit by him till his rubber was ended. When the Prince had finished his game, after talking to me for some time, he proposed to show me his pictures, of which he has a fine collection. A servant was summoned with lights, and we went through the greater part of the house, which is very fine, and on a grand scale, examining the paintings, of which the Prince pointed out the most meritorious and valuable. He talked much of Lord Londonderry, who had visited him the year before; and he asked whether the Marquis' house in London was finer than his own, a question I could not answer. The grand dining-room was a splendid apartment, its chief ornament being a beautiful piece of sculpture; a female figure and a child, the size of life, in white marble, which the Prince had brought from Italy. When we returned from our tour of inspection, I was introduced to two or three persons, with whom I conversed till it was time to take leave. Among others was the Prince of Georgia, the grandson of the last King, who, as I have told you, lost his crown, while his son forfeited his liberty in attempting to regain it, and was imprisoned for life in a Russian fortress.

Moscow abounds in charitable institutions, of which I only visited two, namely, the Cheremetieff and the Galitzin Hospitals. Both are noble establishments, intended for the reception of sick people, and for the maintenance of a certain number of old men and women. Each owes its foundation to the munificence of a private individual, the one having been endowed by Count Cheremetieff, and the other by a Prince Galitzin, uncle to Prince Serge, the present director of it. The former is the richer institution of the two; and, in addition to its other charities, it annually provides marriage portions for a certain number of young women.

It is impossible to speak too highly of the order and cleanliness which appeared in every part of these two hospitals, over each of which I was conducted by the medical gentlemen in attendance. The Cheremetieff has the advantage in point of architecture; but the same system is apparently followed in the interior management of both. There can be little doubt that in many cases the patients derive as much benefit from

the spacious rooms in which they are placed, and the pure and wholesome air which they breathe, as from the medical treatment which they undergo.

In each hospital there is a church for the inmates. I passed through that at the Galitzin while a funeral service was going on. The coffin was placed on a bier in the centre of the church, the lid being off, so that the face of the dead body was exposed. At the head of the corpse were placed three lighted candles. Near the Cheremetieff Hospital we were shown a high tower, of singular architecture, now used for raising water to distribute over the city. It was built in former days by a rich merchant, named Souchareff, for the charitable purpose of furnishing employment to the poor in a time of scarcity.

I will conclude the subject of Moscow by observing that, striking as the Kremlin is, and fine as many of the public and private buildings are, much of the city has more the air of an overgrown country town than of a capital. There is a deficiency of grand arteries; and a great part of the town is filled with a multitude of irregular narrow streets, flanked often, on one or both sides, by a dead wall. There is a provincial rusticity, moreover, in the style of the equipages. The principal cause, however, of the impression which Moscow made upon me in this respect is probably the general dulness of the streets, which, owing to the immense extent of the town in proportion to its population, present none of that thronged and bustling appearance which one naturally looks for in a great capital. At Petersburg the case is very different, and the streets, which were empty and deserted in June, are now crowded with handsome carriages and sledges, as well as with foot passengers. Some of the principal thoroughfares are indeed so crowded that it requires caution to avoid being knocked down in crossing from one side to the other, and the shouts of the coachmen, "*pádi, pádi*," "get out of the way," are incessant. They drive excessively fast, but they will avoid hurting you, if possible, for fear of the punishment, which is to be made a soldier.

I will now conclude this long letter by assuring you that we are very happy to find ourselves at the end of our journey, and not at all inclined to set out upon another until the weather

is a little more genial, and until carriages on wheels can be used instead of sledges, as we have not yet quite forgotten the sensation of jolting in and out of an *ouchaba*. Some friends who left Tamboff about the same time as ourselves, and who arrived here a few days before us, were upset twice in the course of the journey, so that we may consider ourselves fortunate in having escaped all accidents.

## LETTER XXII.

Thaw — Cold in April — Alexandrovsky — General Wilson — The Imperial Manufactory — Foundlings — English artisans — Mr. Law.

St. Petersburg, April 11th, 1838.

WE are in hopes that the winter is now nearly over, as the frost yesterday began to give way, and the thaw is proceeding rapidly. Everybody will rejoice heartily at the arrival of spring, for such a winter as this has been few persons can remember. Greater degrees of cold have been known; but the duration of the frost, and its continued severity for nearly five months, is almost unprecedented even in Russia. So late as this day week (the 4th of April) there were in Petersburg nineteen degrees of cold,\* and in the country twenty. The ice on the Neva is from forty-two to forty-four inches thick, and the ground is frozen to the depth of six feet.

We went yesterday to see the Imperial manufactory at Alexandrovsky, about thirteen versts hence, in compliance with an invitation from General Wilson, who, for thirty years, has superintended the establishment, and who is a most excellent and popular person. The articles manufactured here are of various kinds. In one department, cotton is spun; in another, sheets, table-linen, &c., are woven; and in a third are made all the playing-cards which are used in Russia, as the Crown reserves the monopoly of this manufacture. About three thousand operatives are employed altogether; and of these nearly one thousand are foundlings, boys and girls. At twelve years old the foundlings are brought to the factory from the hospital where they have been reared, and they remain there till the age of twenty-one, when the young men become their own masters, may marry, and may quit the manufactory, or may remain as paid workmen, according as they please. The girls are allowed to marry at eighteen.

\* By Reaumur.

From the moment of their arrival at the manufactory, these foundlings, in addition to their food, clothing, and lodging, receive small monthly wages, half of which is given to them by way of pocket-money, and the other half is placed at interest in a savings-bank; so that when they come of age, or marry, they have a little fund of three or four hundred roubles with which to begin the world. Immediately after our arrival at Alexandrovsky we were taken to see the young operatives at dinner, which, it being Lent, the only fast in the year which they are required to keep, consisted of soup-maigre, fish, rye-bread, and quass—all served in pewter. The day was an ordinary working-day, and there was no preparation for visitors, our arrival, owing to a misunderstanding, being, in fact, quite unexpected. Nothing, however, could exceed the neatness and perfect cleanliness of these young manufacturers, more especially of the girls, with their well-brushed hair neatly braided on the forehead, and fastened behind with a comb, every head being arranged alike. A wooden screen, about six feet high, ran down the middle of the hall to separate the two sexes. Leaving them at their meal, we were shown through the dormitories, which were clean, airy, and comfortable; a convenient washing-room, well supplied with water, being attached to each set.

When we returned to the hall, dinner was over, and at our appearance a bell was rung, when the whole body, young men, boys, and girls, stood up and sung a hymn; at the conclusion of which the bell gave the signal for departure, and the two sexes moved out of the hall at different ends, in the most orderly manner. I was told by General Wilson's brother that in the thirty years during which he has had the management of this manufactory there has never been more than one instance of a girl misconducting herself; a fact which strongly attests the excellence of the regulations which are observed.

This, like all the other public establishments, such as barracks and hospitals, which I have seen in this country, appears a perfect model of order and cleanliness; a fact the more striking in Russia, since there is usually abundant room for improvement in these respects in private houses. Most branches of the work at Alexandrovsky are under the super-

vision of English foremen, so that there is a colony here of our countrymen, amounting to seventy or eighty persons. Divine service is performed for their benefit, in the school-room, every Sunday evening, by the British chaplain, Mr. Law,\* who most kindly goes over from Petersburg for this purpose.

I believe this excursion to Alexandrovsky is the only incident which is worth mentioning since we have been here; you must therefore be contented with a short letter, as you would not thank me if I filled it up with a description of Petersburg, or an account of the relations and friends who are kind enough to invite us to their houses. However, as Easter is approaching, I hope to have more to tell the next time I write.

\* It is but justice to my friend Mr. Law to add, that this duty, which is entirely voluntary and gratuitous on his part, is a laborious addition to two full services which he performs every Sunday in the British church at St. Petersburg.

## LETTER XXIII.

Conclusion of Lent — The Metropolitan washing the feet of twelve priests — Want of decorum in a Russian congregation — Commencement of Easter Sunday — Ceremony at the Kazan church — *Christos voscress* — The Emperor and a Mahometan sentry — The *katchellies* — Coaches and six — Grand promenade — The Emperor and Empress — Silent reception of his Majesty, in accordance with Russian ideas of etiquette — Number of holidays injurious to Russia — Why not abolished.

Petersburg, April 24th, 1838.

LENT is now over, and the Russians, to their great joy, are once more at liberty to eat, dance, and marry, as they please.

On the day before Good Friday we went to the Kazan church, to see the ceremony of the Metropolitan washing the feet of twelve priests. In the centre of the church, which was much crowded, a platform was raised about five feet from the ground, and on this were placed thirteen chairs; six on each side for the priests, and one at the top for the Metropolitan. Mass was first celebrated at the grand altar, and, at the conclusion, the Metropolitan ascended the platform, and took his seat facing the altar, while six or seven deacons placed themselves behind his chair. A service was now chanted, and soon after it had begun two bishops made their appearance on the platform. They bowed to the altar, and then to the Metropolitan, and seated themselves on either side of him. Two priests followed, and took their places in the two next chairs in like manner. Others succeeded them, and at last the twelve chairs were filled. The Metropolitan then rose up, laid aside his ribbons and decorations, took off several robes one after another, and girded himself with a long towel, the chanted service still continuing. He then passed round to each of the twelve priests in succession, with a large silver basin, and went through the form of washing their feet, a deacon accompanying and assisting him. This part of the

ceremony occupied but a very short time, and the service was immediately afterwards concluded.

It is impossible to enter a Russian church without being struck by the want of decorum which the absence of seats produces. The whole congregation, except a few persons of consequence, who are placed near the altar, stand pell-mell, without order or regularity; so that when the church is full the crowd becomes an absolute mob, and those who are attending to the service are disturbed by the moving of others around them. The services in the Greek church are many of them very long, and the fatigue of standing during the whole time is very great.

On the Saturday night, about eleven o'clock, I went again to the Kazan church to see Easter Sunday ushered in. There was a sort of illumination in the streets, earthen lamps being placed in rows on the edge of the foot-pavement; but the light which they produced was far from brilliant. The lamps were wide apart, and the effect very paltry. There was an unusual bustle in the whole town; the pavements were crowded with foot passengers, and a ceaseless stream of carriages with lighted lamps was rolling along.

Inside the church, near the door, were two stalls for the sale of wax-candles of various sizes, and these could scarcely be furnished fast enough to supply the demand. Almost every person who entered bought at least one taper, and many provided themselves with five or six: not, however, lighting them as yet, but keeping them in readiness for midnight. After looking for some time at the crowd which kept moving in and out of the church, I went and stood in front of it until, at half-past eleven, a rocket was sent up, and a gun fired from the fortress: this being a signal for divine service to commence in all the churches in Petersburg. I did not hear the second gun which the fortress fired to announce the actual commencement of Easter-day; but all the people at midnight lighted their candles, and a procession issued from the church, and made the circuit of its walls outside. The ecclesiastics who headed it bore the cross and sacred banners, and chanted a service, while the congregation followed them with lighted tapers.

I observed that many of the common people in the crowd



had in their hands what appeared to be plates tied up in napkins; and I find that this was the first meat which they intended to eat on the conclusion of Lent, and which they brought to church, according to an ancient custom, to be blessed by the priests.

I should have told you that on Good Friday all the Court go,—the gentlemen as usual in uniform, but the ladies in deep mourning,—to kiss the representation of our Saviour's tomb in the Palace Chapel. On Easter Sunday nothing goes on but felicitations, presenting of eggs (the emblem of the Resurrection), and kissing. Servants may kiss their masters or mistresses; and a peasant may kiss the Emperor, though perhaps in the latter case the privilege is not very often exercised. "*Christos voscress*," "Christ has risen," is the universal salutation; and it is a curious thing to see two peasants or tradesmen meet in the street. "*Christos voscress*," they cry out; off go their hats and caps; and then with one accord they rush together and inflict on one another three kisses on the cheek\*—right, left, right. After this each replaces his hat, first making a most profound bow to the other, and at length they separate. There is a story told of the present Emperor, who once on Easter-day, passing a sentry, saluted him as usual with the words "*Christ is risen*." "No; he's not, your Majesty," said the soldier, presenting arms. "He's not!" said the Emperor; "what do you mean? This is Easter Sunday." "I know that, please your Majesty," replied the man; "but I am a Mahometan."

The Russians, high and low, are great observers of times and seasons; and custom requires that at Easter, as well as at Christmas, all persons should visit their acquaintances to congratulate them on the occasion of the festival. Several carriages broke down last week in the performance of this arduous duty, for the streets were in a terrible state, and some almost impassable, owing to the thaw; the snow not having

\* The custom of men kissing one another is as common in Russia as in Germany. Gentlemen hardly ever presume to shake hands with ladies, even if they are intimate acquaintances. In lieu of this, the gentleman kisses the lady's hand, while she at the same time puts her lips to his cheek. This custom is on the decline at Petersburg.

entirely disappeared, but being worn into deep holes, which of course were full of water. On Easter Sunday I saw a few sledges for the last time.

Opposite to the Admiralty, in the open Place, large wooden booths had been erected for theatrical and other exhibitions, and in front of the booths were what are called *katchellies*, namely, swings, merry-go-rounds, and similar inventions. These continued in full play and in high favour during the whole of Easter-week. On the three last days of the week there was a carriage promenade in front of the *katchellies*; and in the throng a string of twenty coaches-and-six, followed by six outriders, was conspicuous. The carriages were plain and neat, painted green, and all exactly alike, with handsome powerful horses, equipped in heavy German harness, and the coachman, postillions, footmen, and outriders, dressed in scarlet great-coats with capes, and in cocked hats, leather breeches, and jack boots. The coachmen were evidently not much accustomed to driving four-in-hand,\* and an English whip would hardly have admired their manner of handling the reins. These were Court equipages, and each carriage contained six young ladies belonging to the public institutions or schools at Petersburg, under the patronage of the Empress, who annually bestows this indulgence upon the pupils.

The last and gayest of the promenades took place, according to custom, the day before yesterday, being the Sunday after Easter. It was attended by the Court and all the fashionable world, and every vehicle in Petersburg was placed in requisition. We remained at our windows, and we could not have been better placed, as, owing to the police regulations, all the carriages were obliged to pass down our street in order to enter the Admiralty Place, and from about half-past five in the evening the stream for two hours was incessant. Soon after six o'clock the officers of the regiment of *Gardes à cheval*, who had been gradually assembling, drew up under our windows in scarlet uniforms, waiting to escort the Emperor, who in the course of half an hour drove up, seated as usual in a plain open carriage with a pair of horses, and accompanied by his eldest son.

\* The horses were driven, not in the Russian style, but in English, or rather German fashion.

They stopped opposite to us, threw off their cloaks, and appeared in the same uniform as the officers in attendance. An aide-de-camp brought the Emperor his horse, which he mounted, and, his son following his example, they saluted right and left, and rode on, followed by the officers of the *Gardes à cheval*.\* As they disappeared under the arch of the *Etat Major*, the Empress with her three daughters turned into the street, at the other end, and passed down it in a handsome open carriage and-four, with two postilions in English style, and followed by two outriders dressed exactly like the postilions, in blue and silver jackets and velvet caps, and escorted by a party of officers of the *Chevaliers Gardes*. The evening was exceedingly fine, and the display was well worth seeing.

As it was known that the Emperor would mount his horse in that spot, a great crowd was assembled to see him: and I could not help being struck by the manner in which he was received, though I am told it was exactly in accordance with his own wishes. In England the air would have been rent on such an occasion by the cheers with which a popular sovereign would have been received—and popular the Emperor undoubtedly is, especially in Petersburg. Here all was calm and silent. Every head was uncovered, but neither hat nor handkerchief was waved in the air; and to have waved one, or to have uttered a shout, would undoubtedly have been considered a gross breach of etiquette, and the enthusiasm of the offender would have been quickly checked by the police. Nothing can be more graceful and dignified than the manner in which the Emperor acknowledges the salutes which he receives as he drives about. He has the royal talent of appearing to direct his attention to each individual in particular, and he never fails to return every salute, even that of a private soldier. With the promenade of Sunday the public festivities of Easter concluded. Yesterday the exhibitions and *katchellies* ceased, and workmen are now busily employed in removing the booths and in clearing the ground.

The unreasonable number of holidays in this country is a severe tax on industry, and at the same time a serious bar to the

\* The *Gardes à cheval* and the *Chevaliers Gardes* are regiments corresponding to our Life Guards and Blues, and equipped like them.

advancement and prosperity of the people, by hindering business and interrupting work ; but a reform in this point would be as difficult to effect with the Russian as it would be to persuade John Bull to live for half the year on black bread and quass, though beef and beer were within his reach. The Emperor Paul de canonized a considerable number of saints ; but there were some whose fêtes, though he much desired it, he did not venture to attack, and there were others whom, from the strong popular feeling, he found himself compelled to re-instate, after having once struck their names out of the calendar. The difficulty of meddling with saints' days forms the principal obstacle to the introduction of the new style into Russia. The advantage of this change is obvious to all, but were it carried into effect a schism in the church is apprehended as the almost certain result.

The snow is now all gone, and dust is already beginning to fly in the streets. The Neva, indeed, is still frozen over, but the ice is become insecure ; and yesterday barriers were erected to prevent horses and carriages from going upon it. Foot passengers, however, still venture to cross the river, and the ice is not expected to break up for some days.

## LETTER XXIV.

Breaking up of the ice — Ice from the Ladoga — Placing a pillar in the church of St. Isaac — Grand parade — Arrival of the Emperor; of the Empress — Review of the troops — Departure of the Court from St. Petersburg — Interview with the Empress.

Petersburg, May 9th, 1838.

EVER since the conclusion of Easter-week, until yesterday, we have had delightful weather. On the morning of the twenty-eighth of last month, eighteen days after the commencement of the thaw, the ice on the Neva broke up, the floating-bridge was removed to let it pass, and in the course of three or four hours the river was sufficiently free to allow the safe passage of boats; indeed, scarcely a piece of ice was to be seen. No boats, however, are allowed to ply until the following ceremony, which dates from the reign of Peter the Great, has been performed. The Commandant of the fortress, under a salute from its guns, crosses the river in his barge, and has an audience of the Emperor, to present him with a certain silver cup, filled with the water of the Neva; and his Majesty returns the cup filled, instead of water, with gold coins. After this the navigation of the Neva is considered as open.

We are still, however, reminded of our northern latitude. The ice in the Gulf of Finland is still firm; and since yesterday the Neva, which for ten days past had reflected nothing but blue sky and bright sun, has been nearly covered with floating ice, as white as snow, drifting rapidly down under the united influence of wind and current. This ice comes from the Ladoga, a lake more than two hundred miles long and a hundred and fifty broad, out of which the Neva issues forty or fifty miles above Petersburg. When the ice of the lake breaks up, and passes down the Neva, it produces for some days a return of winter here. The floating bridges are removed, and the river is encumbered with huge masses of ice, grinding and crashing in the strong current, so that the passage becomes

perilous for boats; while the air itself is chilled, and the bitter north wind brings driving storms of sleet and snow.

Some days ago I went to see a pillar placed in the new church of St. Isaac, which is now in progress. The operation was extremely interesting, from the size of the pillar and the height at which it was placed—it being the second tier or story of columns on which the workmen were engaged. The last pillar was erected yesterday, and the colonnade, which is circular, is now complete. Its base must be a hundred and thirty or forty feet from the ground, and each pillar is a solid block of granite, forty-two feet high, and weighing five thousand poods, or upwards of eighty tons. The columns on the ground-tier, each of which is also a monolith, are fifty-six feet high, and they weigh eleven thousand poods each.

When I reached the platform to which the pillar was to be raised, I had below me a panorama of Petersburg and of the country around for many a mile; the most interesting part of the prospect being the Gulf of Finland, down which I could see as far as Cronstadt. The day was warm and bright, and the air was free from cloud or smoke. From the platform down to the next stage, a depth of about eighty feet, was fixed a strong timber frame, covered with planks, so as to form a very steep inclined plane. At the bottom of this slide, when I first looked down, the column to be raised was lying horizontally on rollers; it was girthed round with very thick ropes drawn very tight, and was padded underneath. Other ropes, or rather cables, secured to these girths, passed along the column, crossing each other over its lower end, and it was lashed to strong planks which lay under it, that the polish of the stone might not be injured in ascending the slide. Over the base on which the column was to stand was placed a high framework of strong timbers. The cables, twelve in number, attached to the pillar, passed through blocks fixed in the frame, and, with the aid of one moveable pulley to each, were drawn by twelve capstans, each manned by fourteen or sixteen men. There were two extra capstans for the purpose of guiding the lower end of the pillar when suspended in the air. Altogether, upwards of two hundred men were employed in the operation. When all was ready, the capstans began to turn, and by

degrees the column, instead of lying in a horizontal position, rested on the inclined plane, which was well greased. Up this it began slowly to ascend, two men standing on its upper end, to be ready in case of the cables becoming entangled. The capstans were all numbered, and the superintendent at the top, calling out sometimes to one gang and sometimes to another to move faster or slower, kept all the ropes drawing equally. The column at length reached the top of the inclined plane, and it was then raised until it was hanging in the high wooden frame exactly over the base on which it was to stand. A coin was dropped into a small hole in the centre of the base, which was then covered with a sheet of lead; and the tackling round the lower end of the pillar being cut and cleared away, it was lowered gently into its place. The whole operation, which was now complete, had occupied about two hours, from the time the capstans began to work until the pillar rested upon its base.

The church of St. Isaac will be an edifice not unworthy of Petersburg, and it will be a remarkable monument of a century which is not an age of cathedral building. About forty thousand pounds have been annually expended upon it for some years past, and the exterior will not be completed for at least two more. The church is to be a few feet higher than St. Paul's, with a dome, the roof of which will be gilt, of nearly the same size with the dome of our cathedral. No materials are employed in any part of the edifice but marble, stone, brick, and metal, so that the building will be fire-proof.

Four days ago we had the good fortune to witness in the Champ-de-Mars a splendid military spectacle. About forty thousand men were on the ground, including nine thousand cavalry, one hundred and twenty-eight pieces of artillery, and a pontoon-train. The whole belonged to the corps of the Imperial Guards, and formed, therefore, I presume, the finest body of troops in the empire. The day was lovely, and the *coup-d'œil* most superb. At twelve o'clock the Emperor arrived on the ground, followed by a numerous suite. The drums beat, and the troops cheered as he galloped down the line and *through* the ranks. By the time he had completed this rapid

inspection, his horse being already covered with foam, the Empress and the Grand Duchesses arrived on the ground in a carriage-and-four, with postilions in the English style, followed by four or five other court-carriages, some with four and some with six horses. The Emperor then mounted a fresh horse and rode through the ranks by the side of her Majesty's carriage, which was afterwards drawn up opposite the centre of the line. The Emperor took his station on horseback by her side, and the troops began to march past. The infantry passed first, preceded only by the mounted Circassians, or, as they are here termed, the Mamelukes of the Guard, in number about forty or fifty. These horsemen wear scarlet uniforms made after the fashion of their country, and are a wild and picturesque-looking body of men. Some are armed with carbines, and some have bows and arrows at their backs.

The infantry was followed by a train of foot-artillery; after which there was a halt for a few minutes, and then the cavalry came up, led by the regiment of Chevaliers-gardes, with their Colonel, the Grand Duke Alexander, the Heir-apparent, at their head. The band of each regiment stationed itself opposite the Emperor, and played while the regiment marched past, and each company or troop as it came up saluted the Emperor with a shout, according to the Russian custom. As soon as the regiment had been reviewed, the Colonel was called up and complimented by the Emperor.

There were four regiments of Cuirassiers, a portion of each being Lancers, a regiment of Horse Grenadiers, and a splendid regiment of Hussars of the Guard in scarlet uniforms, and mounted on greys. These were followed by Lancers, Cossacks, and a superb train of Horse Artillery; the whole force being wound up by the Pontoon Train which I have mentioned.

After a halt for a few minutes the whole of the troops passed a second time before the Emperor, the infantry at double-quick, after which they marched off the ground, and the cavalry at a trot or hand-gallop. The review was to have concluded with a grand charge of cavalry, but this manœuvre was countermanded in consequence of the number of accidents which had occurred at a sort of rehearsal a few days before, on which occasion fourteen officers got falls, and were more or less hurt;



and one of them, having been ridden over by a squadron, was so much injured as to render his recovery doubtful.\*

The Emperor was highly pleased by this review, and a bounty was proclaimed to every soldier who had taken part in it of three roubles, three glasses of brandy, and three pounds of meat.

The immense plains in the south of Russia furnish most of the horses for the cavalry, which is exceedingly well mounted, and the horses of each corps beautifully matched. The price allowed for troopers does not exceed two or three hundred roubles per horse, but the commission to purchase them is given to officers of good fortune, who are glad to obtain leave of absence on this ground, and to purchase good horses; making up out of their own pockets the difference between the Government allowance and the actual cost.

This review is the last act of the Petersburg season, as the Court will shortly be dispersed. The Empress starts in a few days for Germany, and the Emperor will soon follow her. The Grand Duchesses will spend the summer at Tzarsko Celo, or Peterhof, and the Heir-apparent will perform a foreign tour. In Easter-week M— had an interview at the palace with the Empress, who gave her, by appointment, a private audience, receiving her with great kindness and affability, and with a flattering recollection of former days at Berlin. A few days ago we both had the honour of a short conversation with Her Majesty, who met us casually in the Public Gardens, where she was walking with the Grand Duchess Mary. Recognizing M—, she stopped and accosted her, and she then addressed me in English, talking to us very graciously for a few minutes, until a small crowd of observers gathered near, when the Empress proceeded quietly on her walk.

\* The Russian peasant drives his horse in a *tilèga*, but seldom rides him. Few Russian gentlemen ride for pleasure in private life, and many a cavalry officer never mounts a horse excepting in the riding-school or on duty. It would, therefore, hardly be expected that the Russian cavalry should as a body be first-rate horsemen, and this impression is quite correct as far as my observation goes. A civilian's opinion upon military matters is perhaps of little value, but most Englishmen have some eye for a good seat on a horse, and neither officer nor private here seems, as a rule, to possess it, if one may judge from seeing cavalry regiments march. The Cossacks, it *must be owned*, ride fearlessly and well.

## LETTER XXV.

Opening of the navigation — Departure of Mr. Law — The factory library — Visit to the Academy of Fine Arts — The President — The destruction of Pompeii, by Brilloff — Young Kotzebue — Manufactory of tapestry — Malachite temple — Public library — The MSS. — Writing of Mary Queen of Scots — Autographs — Letter from Henrietta, Queen of Charles I. — Expedition to Tzarsko Celo by the railroad — Conclusion of the letters.

St. Petersburg, May 22nd, 1838.

Two days ago the first steamboats of this season from Lubeck came into Cronstadt. One of them had been due ten days, but had been unable to make its way earlier through the ice. However, as the navigation of the Gulf of Finland is at last open, I presume we may consider the winter as fairly at an end, in spite of the Ladoga ice,\* which still continues at intervals to float thickly past. Great numbers of people have been long waiting with impatience to commence a summer-trip abroad in search of health or pleasure; and the two steamboats, which will sail for Lubeck to-morrow and the next day, will be crowded with passengers.

We had intended to be among the number; but our friend Mr. Law is going to England with some of his family for a few months, and he is anxious to lose no part of the short summer, as he must return not later than September. We have therefore given up the berths which we had engaged, and I have undertaken to act for a few weeks as chaplain at Petersburg, in his place, until the arrival of the representative he had provided. The latter, by a singular chance, happens to be no other than my oldest and most intimate friend, who is detained in England by business, and cannot arrive here until the middle of July. The Laws will sail to-morrow in the *Naslednik*; and we shall then remove from our hotel into their comfortable and well-furnished house on the English

\* The last ice came down on the 26th of May. The leaves on the lime-trees did not open till about the 1st of June.

Quay, which is under the same roof with the church. We shall therefore almost imagine ourselves in England; though, indeed, during our whole stay at Petersburg we have enjoyed much English society. I have not dwelt upon this subject in my letters, because you naturally want to hear, not about English people, but about Russia and the Russians; and there is no great difference between our countrymen abroad and our countrymen at home in their customs and ideas. You will readily believe the pleasure and enjoyment which the free use of the Factory library has afforded us during our residence in this city. We have been kindly permitted to carry away any books we chose, and to read them at home; while every variety of literature, from a periodical to a book of reference, finds a place on those well-filled shelves. The English Factory is virtually independent of the censorship, as the government liberally allows them to receive from England and to place in their library any books they please, on the understanding that these unexamined works shall circulate among the English only, and not among their Russian friends.

Among the objects of interest which we have lately been visiting are the Public Library of Petersburg, and the Academy of Fine Arts, of which M—'s uncle, Mr. Olénine,\* is president. He is one of the most distinguished literary men in Russia; was private secretary to the late Emperor, and has been for many years high in office. His house is well known to most foreigners who have visited St. Petersburg; and we have spent in it many of the most agreeable hours we have passed during our stay here.

The object of greatest interest in the exhibition of the Academy at present is a large historical picture by the Russian painter Brilloff. The subject is the destruction of Pompeii, and the picture was painted in Italy. It was presented to the Academy by M. Demidoff, who is said to have purchased it from the artist for thirty-five thousand

\* Tradition says that this family came originally from Ireland, and they themselves suppose the name to be a corruption of O'Neill. A certain degree of fable is, however, mingled in the history, as the Hibernian ancestress is said to have been borne across the sea by a bear, in commemoration of which remarkable circumstance, a bear carrying a lady appears at this day in their coat of arms.

roubles, about fifteen hundred pounds. The general effect of this picture on the eye, at a first glance, is disagreeable, from the nature of the subject, and from the glare of colouring which belongs to such a scene. The hot falling cinders have the appearance of a shower of blood. The conception of the picture, however, shows no ordinary genius; and the expressions and attitudes of the figures and faces are beautifully imagined and admirably painted. The most striking figures are those of an old man borne in the arms of his son, and of a woman stretched dead or dying in the foreground, with black hair streaming on the pavement. She has apparently been thrown out of a chariot, of which the axle is broken, and the horses are rushing wildly away in terror. Next to these is a family group, including a mother with an infant in her arms, unconscious of the danger, and stretching out its hands to catch a small bird which is fluttering on the ground. Lastly, at the left side of the picture appears a group of Christians, as is evident from a cross hung round the neck of one of them. Their resigned, though awe-struck faces, and their attitudes of prayer, are finely contrasted with the terror and despair expressed on the faces and forms of those surrounding them. The portrait of Brilloff himself is to be seen behind the Christians in the person of a man who carries the implements of a painter on his head. The architectural parts of this picture are not so well drawn as the figures. At the right hand there are three statues, intended to be tottering on the parapet of a high building, but which look rather as if they were preparing to make a voluntary plunge into the midst of the crowd below.

In walking through the rooms of the Academy we found a young artist copying a picture, the details of which, it being a battle-piece, he was extremely courteous in explaining, as well as in answering other questions. We found afterwards that he was a son of the famous Kotzebue, who was sent to Siberia (*by mistake*) by the Emperor Paul.

As I am now on the subject of works of art, I may mention, though they have nothing to do with the Academy, the productions of the Imperial manufactory of tapestry in Petersburg. It is on the plan of the Gobelins at Paris, and is now in full operation, preparing carpets and hangings for

the new Winter Palace. The carpets are exceedingly rich and splendid, chiefly in the French style. The tapestry, however, is a more interesting work, and it is exceedingly beautiful. One or two pictures which have been copied, or are now in progress, have quite the effect of paintings at a little distance. The best of those which we saw is a picture of Alexander the Great, receiving the family of Darius.

Another splendid work of art which we have lately seen is a miniature temple destined to be placed in the church of St. Isaac, and in the mean time standing for safety in the large hall of the Tauride, which serves at present as a receptacle for the furniture saved from the Winter Palace. This shrine or temple consists of a dome seven feet in diameter, supported on eight Corinthian pillars about eight feet high. The exterior of the dome is covered with a profusion of gilding on a ground of malachite, and the interior is of lapis lazuli. The pillars are of malachite, with gilt bases and capitals, and the floor is of polished stone of various colours; the whole being raised on steps of polished porphyry. There is, perhaps, too much gilding about this very beautiful work, but this is much in accordance with its destined position in a Greek church. It was presented to the Emperor by M. Demidoff, who procured the malachite from his mines in Siberia, and who sent it to Italy to be worked. Malachite is, as you probably are aware, a stone peculiar to the copper-mines of Siberia. It is of the colour of verdigris marbled, and bears evident marks of having once been in a state of fusion. It can only be obtained in small pieces, so that all malachite work, however solid it may appear, is a species of mosaic formed of innumerable fragments of irregular shape.

In the visit of which I have spoken to the Public Library, I was chiefly interested by the collection of MSS.; some of the most remarkable of which were pointed out to me by Mr. Atkinson, the librarian, who was kind enough to accompany me over the whole Institution. The library contains about four hundred thousand volumes, a considerable part of which were acquired by *right of might*, having been transferred to Petersburg from the Public Library at Warsaw. There are about forty thousand volumes of MSS.

Among those which I examined is a missal which was purchased in France, and which formerly belonged to Mary Queen of Scots. It is quite perfect, except that in the illuminations with which it is abundantly ornamented there have once been numerous coats of arms, every one of which, from the beginning of the book to the end, has been carefully erased, and the shield left vacant. It is difficult to guess with what object this has been done, as no other mutilation is apparent. The chief interest of this missal lies in numerous scraps of the Queen's hand-writing which are to be found in it, breathing in general a melancholy spirit in accordance with her unhappy fortunes. It must be owned that much cannot be said in favour of her poetry, the exact meaning of which is not always very clear. Near the beginning is written across the bottom of two pages, *Ce livre est a moi, Marie reyne, 1553,\** doubtless an autograph.

In another page are written the following lines in the Queen's hand :—

*Un cœur que l'outrage martire,  
Par un mepris ou d'un refus,  
A le pouvoir de faire dire,  
Je ne suis pas ce que ie fus.*

MARIE.

In another place, in the same writing, are these verses :—

*Qui iamais davantage eust contraire le sort,  
Si la vie m'est moins utile que le mort,  
Et plus tost que chager† de mes maus l'aventure,  
Chacun change pour moi d'humeur et de nature.*

MARIE R.

Below these lines the Queen has scrawled a memorandum, "*escrire au Secretaire pour Douglas.*" I was afterwards shown, in a collection of original letters, one from Mary to the King of France, written during her imprisonment, in which, addressing the King as *Monsieur mon Frere*, and signing herself *votre bonne sœur Marie*, she speaks of Douglas, recommending him to the future favour of his most Christian Majesty, whom she at the same time thanks for his attention to her former request in behalf of the same person. In another letter from Fotheringay

\* The last figure is very indistinct, but it appears to be a 3.

† Thus written, obviously for *changer*.

Castle the unhappy Queen expresses her too well-grounded fear of never being released from prison. This collection includes autographs of Henry the Seventh, Henry the Eighth, Elizabeth, James the First, Charles the First and his Queen Henrietta, together with those of many distinguished persons of inferior rank. Among others is Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, in whose hand are two or three letters to the King of France, expressing the deepest gratitude and devotion to his most Christian Majesty, and entreating for a continuance of his favour. I am afraid Queen Elizabeth would not have been altogether pleased with the tone of these epistles. Among the most interesting letters was a long one dated at St. Germain, from Henrietta, Queen of Charles the First, to the Sieur Grignon, begging him, if possible, to procure from *the Speakers of the two Houses and the General* a pass for herself and her attendants, to enable her to visit her husband in England, and to remain with him as long as can be permitted. The Queen expresses her fears that this pass will be refused, but she reminds the Sieur Grignon how much she has the object at heart, and assures him of her eternal gratitude if he succeeds. She then offers to make out, for the inspection of the Speakers and the General, a list of the attendants whom she proposes to bring with her, in order that the name of any person to whom they object may be omitted in the pass.

With these short extracts I will conclude my letter; nor will I detail to you an expedition which we made lately by the railroad with some Russian friends to Tzarsko Celo, where we saw all that is to be seen—the armoury, which is well arranged; the park, which boasts of no fine trees; and the palace itself, which is magnificent. The saloon, the walls of which are entirely encrusted with amber, is celebrated, and is not only curious but beautiful. The floors throughout the palace are exquisite; nor am I sure that a famous parquet, which is ornamented by inlaid bouquets of mother-of-pearl, was the one I most admired. One room has a most singular appearance, from the walls being entirely covered to a certain depth with paintings of all sizes, unframed and fitted into one another like a puzzle; the variety of size and colouring of the paintings giving to the whole an appearance of patchwork. The inn at

which the railroad train set us down is about two versts from the palace, to which we went in an omnibus, and returned in the same manner. After a very merry dinner, in spite of our number, which was thirteen, we embarked again on the railroad and steamed rapidly back to Petersburg, a distance of about sixteen miles.\*

\* At Tzarsko Celo there is a public institution, under the authority of Government, for the education of boys and very young men. An order was lately issued that none of the pupils should wear their hair long. One of them disobeyed this order, and, as he persisted in disobedience, after repeated cautions, he was placed under arrest. Upon this a number of the young men, seventeen or eighteen years old, assembled round the President's house, breaking windows, and committing a great riot. This insubordination obviously required severe repression, but, instead of expelling the offenders, or inflicting such other punishment as our ideas would suggest, the authorities have treated the affair as a political demonstration; and some twenty of these unfortunate lads, all sons of gentlemen of good family, have been sentenced to the ranks of the army as common soldiers. Our Russian friends do not venture to comment on the cruelty and tyranny of such a punishment, but they do not scruple to express their opinion of its absurdity under the circumstances, and they hope that the Emperor may be induced to pardon these foolish boys.



## CONCLUDING REMARKS ON RUSSIA.

Acknowledgment of Russian kindness and hospitality. — **SYSTEM OF EDUCATING BOYS** — In public institutions — At home — Nature of their studies — Foreign preceptors — Amusements — Treatment of children — Military discipline — Village quarters — The young ladies — Results of early marriages — Servants. — **THE GREEK CHURCH** — The clergy — The fasts — Religious tolerance — Children must always be Greeks if either parent is of that church. — **PETERSBURG NOT RUSSIA** — Character of the peasant — Of the tradesman — Commercial spirit pervading all classes. — **PROSPECTS OF RUSSIA** — Probable effects of a political change — Want of independent classes — Light in which the Emperor is viewed by his subjects — Public functionaries — Their motives of action — Suspicions of Government — Tend to deter Russia from foreign aggression — Opinions of four distinguished generals on the power of Russia, offensive and defensive — Reasons why disturbances should be apprehended in Russia — Elements of revolution — The conscription — Natural results of a revolution — Bloodshed and violence — Domestic servants — The revolt of the military colonies — Intrepid behaviour of the Emperor — The present system bad — A change likely to be worse — Character of the Emperor.

In adding to the preceding series of Letters a few general remarks on Russia, I feel reluctant to censure in any degree a country which, were I to describe it merely as it presented itself to me, and according to the treatment which I everywhere experienced from its inhabitants, would certainly be depicted by me under the influence of most favourable impressions. I should be extremely ungrateful were I not to acknowledge the very great kindness and hospitality which were shown to us by those whom it was the immediate object of our journey to visit, and which I often felt exceeded our natural claim upon them as relatives and foreigners. We also everywhere met with much attention and civility from those strangers with whom we became acquainted.

In the following remarks I shall endeavour carefully to

avoid all points which might affect private feelings, should this book ever fall into the hands of any Russian friend.

To begin with the subject of education. Nothing, according to my ideas, can be much worse than the system usually pursued with Russian boys. The commencement of their education is often so long deferred, that their minds are unopened from want of employment; and the boys generally remain much too long under female government, often until they are thirteen, or even fifteen years old; the whole system of management tending to check the gradual growth of manly ideas.

The discipline at all the public institutions or academies is military, whether the pupils are intended for the army or for civil professions; while, if the boy is brought up at home, the usual system in Russia with those who can afford the expense of private tutors, he is not sufficiently thrown on his own resources or accustomed to act for himself.

As to the acquirements which a Russian education professes to bestow, a knowledge of French, and, to a certain extent, of German, and a little history, geography, and arithmetic, form pretty nearly the sum total. French, indeed, is learned and spoken from the cradle, and children often know it as well as their mother tongue: the knowledge, however, of these languages is seldom followed up by much acquaintance with their literature. To French and German, English is sometimes added. The preceptors who are engaged in the houses of Russian gentlemen are almost invariably foreigners, and their time is chiefly occupied in teaching modern languages; a classical education being nearly unheard of.

The Russian boy is little accustomed to hardy and manly amusements. Athletic games appear to be almost unknown to him, and he seldom mounts a horse till he is grown up, or nearly so, when he learns to ride, if he learns at all, in a riding-school.

The Russians dine early, and their children, even from the age of two or three years,\* almost invariably dine with them; the

\* The young children are attended by nurses, who never appear to leave them for a moment. Nothing is more common than for a nurse to dine at table with her master and mistress and their guests, if the party happens to be small and private.

consequence being that they are accustomed to eat of all the dishes which are handed round, and the effects of an unsuitable diet are generally visible in their pale and unhealthy looks. What is much worse for them, however, is the conversation to which they listen at table. The parents may take care to avoid all topics which are unsuited to the ears of children, but they cannot exercise a similar control over their guests, who make remarks upon the conduct of their neighbours, and discuss the usual subjects of gossip and scandal, without much attention to the moral lessons which they may be giving to the children at table with them.

In most countries every one has a general idea of his neighbour's fortune; but in Russia, where the fortunes consist in slaves, the number of which on each estate is registered, the calculations can be made with great nicety; and every child knows, from a very early age, how many peasants his father has, and how many of them will fall to his own share. At the age of eighteen or nineteen the young Russian, in the majority of cases, enters the army, and from the moment he is fairly embarked in the service he is harassed and fatigued to death with drilling and exercising from morning till night. He has scarcely a leisure moment for improving his mind, should he wish to do so, and he perhaps spends the best years of his life in the banishment of a wretched country village, with no society but that of a few comrades, whose ideas do not extend far beyond the pleasures of drinking and smoking.

The ladies in Russia are, generally speaking, very superior, both in acquirements and manners, to the gentlemen. The system of private education, so disadvantageous to boys, is suitable and proper for girls; and as the latter have no military service to put an end to improvement, and to exclude them from good society on their entrance into life, their minds are usually better cultivated than those of the young men, and their manners are more refined.

There is, however, an important event which not unfrequently operates as effectually to stop the education of the young ladies, as does the commencement of a military career in the other sex. I allude to the early marriages, which, as *I have observed*, are often arranged by parents without con-

sulting the inclinations of the parties most concerned. A girl is sometimes married at sixteen, and often at seventeen, from which time the cares of a family naturally begin to fall upon her, and in the generality of cases to supersede the practice of her accomplishments or the improvement of her mind. It may be thought that this misfortune is not peculiar to Russia, but I have already mentioned\* the number and variety of domestic duties which usually devolve on the mistress of a family in Russia; and it must be observed that little confidence can in general be placed in the servants. Being slaves, they have only to avoid absolute punishment, and have little inducement to exert themselves. They have no places to lose by misconduct, no advantageous situations to gain by a good character. Their master is bound to support them whether they are indolent or active, sulky or obliging; and though they may be lazy, dirty, and awkward, he cannot exchange them for the better. The servants themselves well know that this is the case, and therefore the generality of them only try to perform their service with as little trouble to themselves as possible. They have not much work to do, for three or four Russian servants are employed where one would suffice in England, and they spend half their time in sleeping or in playing cards. Sleep, especially, never appears to come amiss to them; they can enjoy it anywhere or in any position, and they would certainly join most cordially with Sancho Panza in the blessings which he invoked on its inventor. It is, nevertheless, the domestic servants who chiefly feel the weight of slavery, since they are always under the master's eye, and are necessarily subject to a more galling surveillance than the ordinary serfs; they also do not so readily obtain permission to marry, since too rapid an increase to the household numbers is by no means convenient or profitable to the master.

The priests, and still more the bishops, in Russia seem to be in a false social position; their hands are kissed, their blessing is asked, and they are treated with a vast deal of outward ceremony, but at the same time their influence is but small, and even the highest dignitaries appear to possess little

\* See the conclusion of Letter XI.

real weight or consideration. This probably arises from the poverty and inferior station of the clergy, whose condition and mode of life is often but little above that of the peasant. The clergy are also very much a class apart, the son generally following the profession of his father, and priests' daughters intermarrying chiefly with priests. In most towns there are ecclesiastical seminaries for the gratuitous education of their sons. None but monks, as I have before mentioned, can become bishops.

In the Greek church there are four great fasts in the year, namely :—

1. Lent, which lasts six weeks, commencing on the Monday before Ash-Wednesday ; the preceding week, moreover, being to a certain degree a fast.
2. A fast in June, which varies in duration from a fortnight to a month.
3. A fast from the 1st to the 14th of August.
4. A fast during the six weeks preceding Christmas.

In addition to these periods, Wednesdays and Fridays are fast-days all the year round. as are also the eves of certain saints' days. No marriages can be performed on a Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday ; nor during any of the great fasts ; nor during Easter week, or the week preceding Lent.

The Greek church disapproves of celibacy in the clergy, but no ecclesiastic can enter into a second marriage.

The language of Divine service in the church is not Russian, but Slavonic, which is by no means universally understood. No restriction is placed on the use of the Bible. In the administration of the Communion to the laity the bread is dipped in the wine and given with a spoon, the priests and the Emperor alone receiving the elements separately.

Russians are fond of 'boasting of their national toleration in all religious matters ; and in conversation they frequently carry this principle to an extreme, since I have often heard them remark, What does it matter whether we are Greeks or Protestants ? we are all equally Christians. This ultra-liberalism, however, is but a loose way of talking, and it is limited to mere words, for the toleration which actually prevails in no way corresponds to it. Religion, it is true, does

not legally disqualify a man from holding any office; but, nevertheless, no marriage can be celebrated between a Russian subject of the Established Church and a person of any other religion, until an undertaking has been signed by the dissenting party, whether it be the husband or the wife, that all the issue of the marriage shall be brought up in the Greek faith. This law almost amounts to a prohibition of such unions, and it is utterly inconsistent with the pretence of religious equality for all churches, and toleration for all creeds.

Foreigners in Russia are commonly told "Petersburg is not Russia: if you wish to see Russians as they really are, you must look for them at Moscow, or in the interior of the country." This often repeated phrase undoubtedly contains much truth; for the strong admixture of strangers in the population of Petersburg must produce a great effect on the habits of the place. The whole number of inhabitants is about four hundred thousand, and of these no less than sixty thousand are Germans; subjects, it is true, for the most part, of the Emperor, but still perfectly distinct in language, habits, and religious opinions from the Russians. Of English residents there are about two thousand, and the number of French is very considerable. Petersburg, moreover, is not only the capital of the empire, and therefore the centre of wealth and of luxury, the spot where civilization proceeds most rapidly, and where changes first appear; but it is also what it is often called, namely, the window through which Russia looks at Europe. It may be added, it is also the door by which Europe and European ideas and habits enter Russia. For these reasons it is even more necessary in this than in other countries for those who wish to learn the national character, and to witness national customs, to seek them in the interior, and not in the capital.

The Russian peasant is rude and ignorant, but he is endowed with a high degree of natural shrewdness and ingenuity, and I have more than once had occasion to admire, not only his readiness to give assistance in a difficulty,\* but also his handy

\* Yet, owing to an apparently absurd police regulation at Petersburg, and also at Moscow, if a person breaks his leg in the street, or meets with any other accident, no one, as I am assured, will give him a helping hand, or render the slightest aid, till the police arrive.

and efficient mode of proceeding to work on the occasion. Good humour, and a gay obliging disposition, are among the leading traits of his character; while his aptitude to acquire any art, and his genius for imitation, are sufficiently attested by the manufactories which are carried on in every part of the country by the hands of the peasants born on the spot. Like all uncivilized men, the Russian peasant is inclined to pilfer; but open robbery or acts of violence are very rare, and one may travel unarmed in perfect security through the empire.

The ordinary Russian tradesman is apt to be mean, dishonest, and tricky, asking for his goods twice what he eventually takes, and whenever it is possible imposing an inferior article on his customer, trying to make the most at present, instead of tempting the purchaser, by fair dealing, to return another time to his shop. A spirit of trade runs through all ranks of the community. The peasant is forced to be a trader, because he is paid for his labour in land, of which he must sell, to the best advantage, the superfluous produce. The class above the peasant consists of traders by profession; and the noble endeavours to increase his fortune, and to make up for the small returns of his land, by establishing the rural manufactories of which I have often spoken.

It is difficult to perceive how Russia, under her present circumstances, can advance much further in civilization. Her iron despotism, her superstition, and her system of slavery are suited only to a state of darkness and semibarbarism among the mass of the people. Yet it is hardly to be desired that they should emerge from this condition, since with light would of necessity arise a keener perception of grievances and a thirst for change; while it seems impossible that the country should attain to the blessings of freedom and of liberal institutions without passing through the ordeal of a fierce and bloody revolution. If the present order of things were once shaken, it must be very long before the government of the empire and before public credit could be re-established on a firm and stable footing. In fact, Russia appears to contain no elements for a free government on sound principles, and a revolution would be likely to produce nothing but a state of anarchy and confusion, such as that of the South American Republics. There

is no independent class in the country, unless the traders may be so considered; but they are uneducated, narrow-minded, and superstitious in the extreme; and they form, moreover, numerically, but a very small proportion of the community. Influence or authority, not conferred by the Emperor's commission, is an idea which few Russians at all comprehend; the empire is indeed but a vast army, of which the Emperor is General-in-Chief, unless, *parvis componere magna*, it be regarded as a great school, of which he is Head Master. This indeed, though the comparison may not be very dignified, is really much the light in which his Imperial Majesty appears to be regarded in his dominions. Wherever he is expected to pass, institutions are put in order, roads are repaired, and bridges mended, on which the rest of the world might have broken their necks unnoticed. In short, the same sort of effect is produced as that which, in a school-room, generally follows the intimation that "—— is coming!" when noise ceases, books are opened, every one slips quietly into his place, endeavouring to look as if he had never been out of it, and the most disorderly are of course most careful to put on a studious and attentive demeanour. In Russia, where public opinion is almost unknown, public spirit cannot be expected to show itself on ordinary occasions, though that it does exist, and that it only requires circumstances to call it into play, was sufficiently proved at the period of the French invasion. Functionaries, therefore, of all classes, military and civil, high and low, must generally be expected to act, not so much with a view to the public good, or even to the attainment of popularity and reputation, as with the object of attracting the favourable notice of the Emperor, the only source of honour, promotion, and reward.

The Government perpetually betrays an apprehension of revolt and conspiracy, which would seem to show that the basis is not felt to be very secure on which the internal peace and tranquillity of the empire rest.

I have heard it asserted, on good authority, that some time ago four general officers, namely, Marshal Marmont in France, the Archduke Ferdinand in Austria, General Wrede in Bavaria, and the Duke of Wellington in England, were requested



to furnish to their respective Governments their opinions as to the power of Russia, offensive and defensive, as invading Europe or resisting invasion at home. The opinions of these four distinguished personages were unanimous, to the effect that Russia as an invader would be weak, from the impossibility of organizing a sufficient commissariat, or of maintaining her troops when beyond her own territory ; but that, on the other hand, if invaded, she would be impregnable, from her immense extent of frontier, and from the very large bodies of men which she could immediately oppose to the invaders at whatever point the attack were made, her climate being also an insurmountable obstacle.\*

To return from this digression : it is not surprising that the Russian Government should be apprehensive of political disturbances, for the country has a formidable body of natural enemies to the present order of things in her twenty-two millions of male serfs, who are indeed, at present, exceedingly tranquil, like the contents of a well-guarded powder-magazine, but who may some day, by a sudden explosion, overthrow the empire. Nor are there wanting those who would willingly seize an opportunity to fire the train. There are discontented nobles to raise the standard of rebellion, and there are sectarians as well inclined to subvert the established government as the established religion. Let these at a favourable moment proclaim freedom to the serfs, and it is hardly to be expected that they will refuse the offer. The Russian peasant is too unenlightened to appreciate the real blessings of liberty, but he would readily comprehend the advantage of not being compelled to labour three days in the week for his master ; although, in point of fact, by so doing, he merely pays the rent of the land which he occupies himself. Great, however, as this temptation would be, a greater still might be held out to him in a release from the terrors of the conscription, which is, in truth, the most pressing evil of his lot, and the one most dreaded by him.

It is to him what, according to the old Scotch superstition,

\* These opinions obviously apply to an inland invasion like that of the French in 1812, not to operations supported by the command of the sea, like those of the allied armies in the Crimea in 1854 and 1855.

"the teind to hell" was to the fairies; and as, in their case, the victim was "fat and fair of flesh," so the conscript must be young, strong, and healthy, and, in short, one of the most able and useful members of his family. Every domestic tie is severed, even in time of peace, for him who becomes a Russian soldier. His home is lost; his wife is a widow; his children are orphans; his parents are childless as much as if he were dead; and he himself is twice as much a slave as he was before. The Emperor is become his master; and when he is enlisted, he knows not where or what his service will be—whether by sea or by land—whether that of a soldier or of a sailor. The generality, it is true, of the recruits soon become reconciled to their lot, for their disposition is easy, and, being fatalists, they consider that they are only fulfilling their destiny. Nevertheless, the diseases which they counterfeit,\* and still more, the mutilations which they often inflict upon themselves, in the hope of being thus incapacitated for the service, prove their dread of being forced into it.

Should any inducements be successful in exciting the people to revolt, the first result of the overthrow of the present order of things would undoubtedly be a reign of terror, in the massacres and other acts of violence which must be expected from a population in the depths of ignorance, suddenly freed, not only from their fetters, but from the ordinary restraints of law and subordination. Their worst passions would naturally be roused against their late masters, whom they would be taught to regard as their enemies and oppressors. A man's foes would truly be those of his own household; for the domestic servants suffer naturally more than the peasants from the authority of a good master and the tyranny of a bad one. They would consider that they had the most injuries to avenge, and their vengeance would be the most terrible. The consequences which might be looked for if the slaves rose against their masters, and the soldiers against their officers, may be judged of

\* This is a very common plan with the conscripts: they pretend to be subject to fits, and counterfeit other attacks, the existence of which is not easily disproved; and men have been known to chop off their fingers with an axe, and even to inflict upon themselves still more dreadful mutilations, in order to escape the conscription.

by the revolt of the military colonies which took place soon after the accession of the present Emperor, and which was repressed entirely by his personal intrepidity in proceeding immediately to the spot, appearing unguarded amongst the rioters, and asserting his authority at the risk of his life. On that occasion no atrocity was omitted, and the unhappy officers who had incurred the fury of their men were not merely murdered, but tortured with the utmost barbarity.

After the murders and acts of violence which must be expected, the next result to be apprehended from a revolution in Russia would be a fearful and general famine; for utter improvidence is one leading characteristic of the peasant, and, if he found himself suddenly relieved from the obligation of working for his master, he probably would have little forethought for himself.

At any rate, during the period of the convulsion, the land of the master would be uncultivated, and half the country would be unproductive; the other half being, to say the least, very generally neglected. This evil would, of course, be remedied by time; the proprietors would, as in other countries, employ hired labourers for the cultivation of their land; and the peasant would learn that, whether slave or freeman, he must equally earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. Before, however, the period of re-action came, multitudes must have perished from the neglect of husbandry, and from the consequent deficiency of crops, even if it were but for one season. Russia has no external resources, she depends entirely upon herself to supply food for her population, and, if that supply were to fail, the population must perish for want.

On the whole, odious and bad as the present Government and system of things in Russia is, and iron as is the despotism which prevails, the country, it must be allowed, is morally unfitted for liberal institutions. Were this doubtful, the character of the different conspiracies which have been brought to light would be sufficient to prove the fact. These have always either commenced or been intended to commence by murder and bloodshed; and it has never appeared that those engaged in revolutionary projects had any rational or feasible system of Government to propose, if they had succeeded in overthrowing

the ruling powers. Were it practicable, therefore, to bring about a revolution, it would be doing certain evil without any assurance of future good;—the prospect on the one hand of advantage being very remote and doubtful, and the evils on the other hand to be incurred most imminent and dreadful. This view of things will not justify, but it may serve to explain, the uniform and inexorable severity of the Emperor Nicholas to political offenders, while to ordinary criminals he often shows an undue degree of indulgence and leniency. He has laid it down as a fixed and fundamental principle, to allow of no political changes, and to suffer no political agitation, in his dominions; and for the maintenance of this principle he is utterly regardless of the amount of individual suffering he may inflict. Polish convicts especially are often treated with the grossest and most wanton cruelty. I was told by a person on whose authority I could rely, that a party of Polish Roman Catholic priests, condemned to Siberia, had been compelled to travel for some distance on foot, chained together, and with their arms fixed to bars and stretched out as though on a cross. Such tyranny however is probably not to be attributed to the Emperor himself. It is the result of the ancient and undying antipathy which exists between the Russian and the Pole, and which is on both sides inconceivably bitter and inveterate. Ambitious and despotic as the Emperor Nicholas is, when any calamity occurs he is always foremost in aiding the sufferers. He is very affectionate in his own family, and it is evident that he has no personal fear of his subjects. He constantly shows himself without guard or escort; and when he is at Petersburg he appears daily in the streets wrapped in his cloak and seated in a small one-horse sledge, or in a low open carriage and pair, with no servant or attendant but the coachman. No sovereign therefore can seem to exhibit a more entire confidence than Nicholas does in the personal attachment of his people. His real strength lies in the devotion of the peasantry and in the fear of the nobles, and he trusts in his own prestige, which never yet has failed him.

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## DETAILS OF RUSSIAN HUSBANDRY

AND

## RURAL ECONOMY,

IN A

LETTER FROM MR. SABOUROFF, OF TAMBOFF.

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Mr. SABOUROFF is a landed gentleman whose estate lies in the Government of Tamboff. I had the advantage of becoming intimately acquainted with him during the winter of 1837-8, and in the course of conversation I took frequent opportunities of gaining information, which he was always extremely kind in imparting, on the state of husbandry in Russia, and on the system of management generally pursued; these being points to which he devoted much of his time and attention. One day he said to me, after we had been talking on the subject:—"You appear to take a considerable interest in these matters, and if you like I will put on paper a few remarks, which may give you a general idea of our mode of managing our estates, and of our system of agriculture." I thanked Mr. Sabouroff for this kind offer, which I gladly accepted, and the day that I quitted Tamboff, on taking leave of me, he presented me with the promised paper, in the form of a letter, of which the following is a translation. Being from the pen of a Russian country gentleman, it may be relied on as giving an authentic account of the position and revenues of the landed proprietor, and of the condition and occupations of the peasant.

LETTER FROM MR. SABOUROFF.

Tamboff, February 14th (O.S.), 1838.

You have paid me the compliment of applying to me for some information on the subject of our rural economy, and it

is with the greatest pleasure that I sit down to furnish you with it to the best of my ability. As a resident ~~landed~~ proprietor, I am not unacquainted with the ~~subject~~ on which I now enter, first bespeaking your ~~indulgence~~ for a composition which is not written in my ~~native~~ tongue.\*

I think the ~~end in~~ view will be best answered by a ~~summary~~ description of an estate of moderate size, with all the details of its cultivation and general management. Knowing one, you will know all, for in our system of husbandry there is little variety. From habit and circumstances we follow a general routine, the exceptions to which are rare, and attributable rather to the fancies of individual proprietors ~~than~~ to any other cause.

We value our estates by the number of *souls* upon them, taking into account the male serfs only. This is an ancient custom, derived from the old times, when our revenues depended upon the number of hands at our disposal. At present the case is changed; the land is the source of our profits, while our serfs are often a dead weight upon us,—the more so, that they stand by no means on the footing of the Roman slaves, but they are possessed of rights, some established by law, and more by custom. The law places at their disposal three of the working days of every week, and Sundays and holidays in addition. Their master is obliged to supply them with food and the other necessities of life; and if the serf becomes a beggar, the master is liable to a fine.

The custom of the country is to allot to the peasants the half of the land which belongs to the owner of the estate; to defend them against all aggression and ill-treatment at the hands of strangers; and strictly to respect their property. The exceptions to this conduct are rare, and, when they occur, are quoted with indignation and pointed to with contempt; so that on this point public opinion supplies the place of law. We have even, from a regard to their feelings, adopted for our peasants the very appellation, viz. that of *Christians*, which they have given themselves.

\* The letter was written in French, but this apology was very unnecessary, Mr. Sabouroff being as much at home in that language as in the rural economy of his native country.

With these means and this order of things our peasant is by no means in a bad condition. His habits and desires are, owing to his want of civilization, simple in the extreme. But were his wishes enlarged, he could easily gratify them; land, and the time to cultivate it, being at his disposal. Our peasant works hard, sleeps but little, is satisfied with the coarsest food, and is by no means an habitual drunkard, though he now and then breaks the monotony of his existence by a fit of brutal intoxication. But even in this state his natural good humour shows itself. The quarrels which these occasional revels produce, though noisy enough, never lead to blood-shedding. Of this, indeed, the Russian peasant has a horror, and murders are extremely rare. Let him be oppressed, and he will contrive to revenge himself by a short but biting sarcasm. He is deeply imbued with a reverence for religion, and is not so much superstitious as thoroughly ignorant. He kisses the hand of his parish priest, but he laughs at his failings, and is quite able to make the distinction between the individual and the office. Of this I can give you a very characteristic anecdote. Passing one day near a large group of peasants who were assembled in the middle of the village, I asked them what was going forward.

"We are only putting the Father (as they call the priest) into a cellar."

"Into a cellar," I replied; "what are you doing that for?"

"Oh," said they, "he is a sad drunkard, and is in a state of intoxication all the week. So we always take care, every Saturday, to put him in a safe place, that he may be fit to officiate at church next day; and on Monday he is at liberty to begin drinking again."

I could not help applauding this very sensible arrangement, which was related to me with all the gravity in the world.

But to return to our system of husbandry, of which I think I have explained the character of the principal elements, viz. the tillers of the soil, who are by no means the mere machines which they are commonly supposed to be. To govern them, a little order in the arrangements, a certain degree of tact, and, above all, impartial justice, are the chief requisites.

A village of two hundred souls (*i. e.* male peasants of all



ages) possesses usually two thousand acres of productive land. The crown, or imperial acre, which is employed in all public transactions, contains two thousand four hundred square sagues,\* or thirteen thousand and sixty-six square yards. The common acre, which, as more convenient, is in ordinary use, contains three thousand two hundred square sagues, or seventeen thousand four hundred and twenty-two square yards. Two hundred souls are usually reckoned to furnish eighty labourers, women and men, for the wives † toil as well as their husbands. These work three days in the week for their master, who gives up to them, in return, the half of his land.

The system of agriculture is triennial, with fallows; that is to say, the land bears two crops in three years. Each married couple receives two acres in each of the three portions; i. e. winter corn, spring crop, and fallow, into which, by this system, the arable land is divided; so that they have in all six acres, in addition to an acre of meadow and an acre of pasture. Besides this, they have the ground for a house, garden, and out-buildings; and, by way of rent for their allotment, the peasant and his wife are required to cultivate as much for their master as they occupy themselves. The quantity of land thus apportioned to each peasant would appear enormous in any other country of Europe; but with us it is not too much, for we do not manure our land, ‡ and our only agricultural instruments consist in a very light plough and a wooden harrow, either of them drawn with ease by a single horse. The fine season being very short, the operations of husbandry are performed with surprising activity. The vast tracts covered by abundant crops are quickly bared, and the produce is heaped up in open barns. In winter, the grain, consisting of rye (the staple food of the country), wheat, barley, oats, pease, millet, and buckwheat, is threshed, usually with the flail, but sometimes with a Scotch threshing machine; and it is then transported into the towns,

\* 1 sagine = 9 feet; and therefore, as the statute acre = 4840 yards or 43,560 feet,—

1 Imperial acre (Russian) = 2·7 statute acres nearly.

1 Common acre (Russian) = 3·7 statute acres nearly.

† Possessing bodies, though not counted as souls.

‡ That is to say, in the Government of Tamboff; and some other southern districts. In Russia, in general, manure is highly necessary.

sometimes to a distance of one or two hundred versts. The straw is consumed by the cattle, and is also used in the steppes, where wood is scarce, for heating the stoves. There is, however, often a surplus, which is employed to make fences for gardens, or embankments for ponds and marshes. Our roads and highways not being stoned, the immense transports of produce can, generally speaking, only be made in winter on sledges. If the transport ever takes place in summer, it is effected by means of oxen, the keep of which costs nothing, since the road itself supplies them with pasture; for it is no less than two hundred and ten feet, or thirty sagines, wide, and all as green as a meadow. These oxen, which are seldom employed in tilling the land, but always in transporting goods, come to us from the vast steppes of the Volga and the Don, and from the Caucasus; and this periodical influx of horned beasts, which are brought in great numbers from all the confines of the empire, is the source of frequent plagues and distempers, which destroy our cattle and frustrate all our endeavours to improve the breed. Some amateur agriculturists of large fortune possess fine cattle, imported at a great expense from England and Holland; but all the profit, hitherto at least, has been absorbed by the expense and precautions\* necessary for the preservation of these animals—precautions indeed which, for the generality of proprietors, and still more for the peasants, are totally out of the question. This is the reason why, with our fine pastures and apparently with all the means of having an excellent breed of horned cattle, we have nothing but poor and miserable animals. With Merino sheep the case is very different; our wools, indeed, are not first-rate, because at present quantity is found more profitable than quality, and our cloth factories are not yet adapted for manufacturing the fine sorts of wool. The consequence is, that, while coarse wool affords to the grower an immense profit, fine wool fetches less than prime cost, and the owners of flocks of superior breeds are only paid by the sale of rams. This is an excellent state of things for extending the Merino blood and improving the breed of

\* Precautions, that is to say, against the effects of the Russian climate, to which they are not mortgagee.

sheep by degrees. The ram trade is at present a very flourishing business.

Now as to our horses, we must divide them into two classes—those of the gentry and those of the peasants. The gentry occupy themselves zealously and successfully with their breeding studs, upon which they spare neither expense nor trouble. The studs of the province of Tamboff are chiefly supplied by the fine stallions bred by Countess Orloff. The grand object is to produce fine powerful trotters, and in this we meet with great success. With the peasants' horses the case is quite different. They are small, of a bad breed, ill fed, and worse cared for. There is no legislative measure in existence for their improvement; the habits of the people in no way supply this deficiency, and the breed of horses of this description is utterly neglected, and is visibly growing worse. In this case, as in many others, our system of husbandry is passing through a crisis. Formerly the immense tracts of arable and pasture, and the superabundance of grain, permitted the keeping of great numbers of horses, half wild, but strong and hardy; and the remains of this stock are still to be seen in the hands of our peasants. The people, however, have not yet learned to accommodate themselves to the present state of things, now that land is scarcer and forage dearer; so that they ought to be more careful, and to bestow more attention on the breed and on the keep of their stock. Habit, and the recollection of the time when they might wander for pasture far and wide, have hitherto interfered to prevent the adoption of an improved system among our peasants; but it is to be hoped that, when the origin and progress of this evil are once fairly perceived, the landed gentry and the Government will take measures to remedy it. This is the more probable, since society in Russia was never so much occupied as at present in promoting all kinds of industry, and everything connected with agriculture in particular. A movement has been lately produced which is active enough, and which may resolve itself into satisfactory results.

A few ordinary sheep, pigs, poultry of all kinds, and one or two cows, in addition to the horse, the sorry description of which we have just lamented, complete the live stock of the

peasant, and help to consume the produce of his land, which he cannot sell at any price, however low, on account of the distance of the markets. In a year of plenty, the different kinds of corn become exceedingly cheap, and are consumed with reckless improvidence, since no one thinks of laying by. And this will explain the terrible dearths which sometimes visit us. But we will return to this subject, and treat it more at length. These dearths arise from numerous causes.

With the triennial system our manner of proceeding is very simple. In the month of August we sow our winter corn, viz. rye, and a small patch of wheat, having ploughed the ground twice in the course of the summer. In September, after the harvest, we prepare the ground for the spring by a light ploughing, and in the month of April, after a second ploughing, we sow it with oats, barley, pease, and millet, and a little later with buckwheat. In June we prepare the ground for the winter crop, and begin to mow the grass, and the corn harvest begins in the middle of July, thus completing the annual routine of our husbandry.\*

I must inform you that the twentieth part of our population lives in towns, and is engaged in various trades; the remainder is wholly agricultural. Every peasant, as you have seen above, cultivates for his master and himself, in addition to the fallow, eight acres of arable land, and mows two acres of meadow. Every acre in a plentiful year gives not less than ten measures called *chetverts* † of grain. You can judge, therefore, of the immense quantity of our produce, of which more than half remains on our hands, owing to the lowness of the price and the prodigality of consumption. Two or three successive years of good crops overload us to the greatest possible degree. No human force can dispose of the produce, and our storehouses are not capacious enough to contain the corn; the more so, that buildings of all kinds are very expensive with us.‡ The natural

\* It must be remembered that the seasons are reckoned in Russia according to the old style, twelve days, or nearly half a month, later than the new; so that the hay harvest does not really begin till July, or the corn harvest till August.

† The chetvert of rye weighs six Russian poods, or 216 lbs. As a measure, 1 chetvert = 5.77 imperial bushels.

‡ From the scarcity of stone and wood in this part of Russia.

question then is,—why do we produce so much, and why do we not vary our productions?—a question easy to ask, but not perhaps so easy to answer. Our peasants being once provided for by the allotment of land, being unable to read or write, and ignorant of every art but that of husbandry, time and money would be requisite to teach them and to habituate them to any other branch of industry. Now time and money are generally the very things of which landed proprietors in this country have least at their disposal. They must live, educate their children, and pay the debt to the crown.\* They are always forced to dispose of their annual produce in a hurry, in order to realize the necessary sum of money; and they seldom have in any degree the means of attempting to reform their system of management. I am speaking here of people of moderate fortune. Where the property is on a great scale, the case is often still worse, and the revenue is entirely absorbed by the luxury and expenses of the capital, without any benefit to the provinces, or to agriculture.

However full of grain of all kinds our storehouses may be, it is clearly impossible, as you see, to check the production. We cannot dismiss our people when we do not want them, as if they were hired labourers; and in spite of the superabundance on hand, they must continue to produce, were it only for the sake of occupation. But since our hopes rest less on our mode of cultivation than on the fertility of the soil, and the rain from heaven,—let the rain, as is not unfrequently the case, fail, or a frost in the very height of summer utterly ruin our crops; then prices suddenly rise, and every one is in a hurry to empty his barns, and to dispose of the stock on hand. Since the case is out of the common way,\* no one calculates on its recurrence; but, on the contrary, the chances are always in favour of the crop. But suppose a second year like the former, then prices become extraordinarily high, and the most prudent profit by it, and hasten to sell their produce. Under these circumstances, let there be a third year such as the two preceding it, and you have a complete famine, the more likely to be general, since our system of husbandry and the want of

\* When, as is generally the case, there is a mortgage on the estate, the Crown is the mortgagee.

variety in the produce is common to all Russia. Owing, moreover, to our total deficiency in the means of internal communication, it sometimes happens that, while in one part of the country there is a superabundance, another part is suffering from dearth. Our province of Tamboff is, it is true, fortunately circumstanced with respect to means of communication; since it possesses a central port (of inland navigation), connecting it by the great navigable rivers, the Occa and the Volga, with Petersburg and Moscow. This port is Morscha, a small district town, which carries on a considerable trade, and where there is also a very fine flour-mill, constructed by the mechanician Ruodebort, and belonging to Count Koutaisoff. In spite, however, of these advantages, our rye almost always sells for less than five roubles (about four shillings) the chetvert or measure of two hundred and sixteen pounds, and this renders our taxes, though nominally small, extremely burdensome in reality. The tax, with us, which presses on agriculture, is purely personal. It is levied on every male once in three months; and is paid into the chest of the government of the province: the collectors being officers of the crown, elected by the nobility. There is also another local tax for the district (*pour la commune*); but these two taxes are so essentially personal, being levied on the individual, and not on the property, that there are immense fortunes belonging sometimes to nobles, but more often to traders and others not privileged to possess serfs, which absolutely pay no tax at all. This is a defect in our system, for the burden of course falls on the shoulders of the poor instead of the rich.

I have told you that these taxes, though nominally small, are burdensome; and I will show you why. A peasant's family, on an average, consists, we will suppose, of a father in the prime of life, three children, and an infirm old man; these compose the males, and we may reckon three of the other sex. Of the whole family, the father alone is an able-bodied labourer, and the rest (since no branch of industry is exercised in the village which is suited to their strength) can do little or nothing towards gaining a livelihood. The labour of the father must, therefore, maintain eight persons, and pay the tax for five (the supposed number of males)—four roubles

per head per annum to the crown, and two roubles to the district, which gives six roubles per head, or thirty roubles in all. But the tax must be paid in *bank assignats*, while produce of every kind is sold for *money*; the latter currency being here worth eighteen per cent. less than the former. We must, therefore, add five roubles for this difference, and the result is, that the tax amounts to *thirty-five roubles \* per annum, practically falling on one individual*; and to raise this sum, even if his crop be a good one, he must sell the produce of two out of his four acres of arable land, and with the remainder he must support his family. Half the year then is occupied in working for his master, and half the remainder, as we see, must be employed in raising the means of paying his taxes, which at first sight appear so small. The peasant, therefore, in reality has but one-fourth of the profit of his year's labour for himself. The dues paid by the crown peasant are three times as great, but he has all his time and all the land to himself, in place of dividing both with a master. This is an advantage; but to counterbalance this, the crown estates are in general worse managed than those of private individuals. In the latter case the master aids and supports the poor peasant, and defends him from usurious exactions at the hands of the rich, and from all vexatious treatment; while on the crown estates the rich peasant is continually increasing his wealth, but the poor man becomes utterly ruined, besides being constantly subject to every sort of vexation. This state of things has become so intolerably bad as to demand a complete re-organization, with which General Kissileff has been charged.

Besides the poll-taxes which I have mentioned, there are two other imposts which press on the agriculturist. These are the duties which are laid on salt and *vodka*, or home-made brandy, by the government monopoly of these two articles. Salt indeed is not very dear, but the price of the brandy is exorbitant. This liquor, which is distilled from rye, is sold in the spirit-shops at eight roubles the *vedro*,† while its prime cost is but one rouble and a half. This impost, how-

\* i.e. about 1*l.* 9*s.*, taking the rouble as = 10*d.* It will be remembered that the *silver rouble* had not in 1838 been adopted as the standard.

† 1 *vedro* = 2.705 imperial gallons.

ever, is at least indirect, and it depends upon the choice of every individual to be affected by it or not. In fact, though drunkards are to be met with, this is by no means the general character of the people, a fact which I can prove statistically. The district of Tamboff, with the town, comprises a peasant population, male and female, of 180,000, while its consumption of spirits amounts to 120,000 *vedros*. Deduct for the consumption of the nobility and trading class 20,000 *vedros*, and of the peasant population suppose one-fourth, or 45,000, to consist of women and children who never drink spirits, and you will have 100,000 *vedros* to be consumed by 135,000 men, which amounts to but two small glasses of spirits for each per week, reckoning about a hundred glasses to the *vedro*, and this is certainly not much. Every gentleman and person in easy circumstances takes in general twenty-one glasses a week, according to our ordinary custom of drinking a *petit verre* before dinner, another as a *chasse café*, and a third before supper, and yet no one thinks of calling such persons drunkards. The peasant, however, has gained this character, by drinking quass all the year round, excepting on two or three days, when he varies his monotonous existence by a fit of excessive intoxication. Besides which, here, as everywhere else, one man, when drunk, makes more disturbance than a hundred when sober.

There is another grand disadvantage under which our agriculture labours, in the land not being divided. The law of Catherine the Second only partitioned the villages; a more special provision is yet to come. This subject at present occupies the attention of Government; but the difficulties to be overcome are immense.

Here Mr. Sabouroff's instructive letter concludes. I believe that by the last clause he means that the law, as it now stands, provides only for the division of separate properties, and that the measure to be desired is one which would assign to each peasant his own allotment, so as to give him a permanent interest in its improvement.

I think, however, that one most important obstacle to the prosperity of the landed interest of Russia is not alluded to by



Mr. Sabouroff, and this is the compulsory partition of an estate among the children of a proprietor at his death. This law reduces every man to the condition of a life-tenant on his property, and must often prevent him from beginning an extensive system of improvement, which he cannot expect each of his various heirs to follow up, or which, when the estate became divided, as it must be, would be probably out of their power. The law at the same time destroys those feelings of local attachment and pride with which a man regards the property which is connected with the names of his fathers, and which he hopes to hand down intact to his descendants.

The following prices of provisions and agricultural produce at Tamboff, in November, 1837, are, I believe, tolerably correct. They prove the extreme scarcity of money alluded to by Mr. Sabouroff:—

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>	
Fat turkeys.....	1	10	per couple.
Ditto geese .....	2	0	ditto
Ditto fowls or ducks ...	1	3	ditto
Black game .....	1	0	per brace.
Gelinottes .....	1	8	ditto

Meat from  $\frac{1}{4}d.$  to  $2d.$  per lb.

Rye  $3s. 9d.$  per chetvert; wheat somewhat dearer.

Potatoes from  $8d.$  to  $10d.$  per chetvert.

Oats, as I was assured, had been sold as low as  $1s.$  per chetvert, though it seems hardly credible.

# CENSUS OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE, TAKEN IN THE YEAR 1836.

Russian Priests .....	52,331		
Deacons and Sacristans .....	63,178		
Male children of Priests, Deacons, } and Sacristans .....	138,548		Wives and Daughters of Priests, &c.
Total .....	254,057	.....	249,748
Priests of the United Greek and } Roman Church .....	7,823	Wives, &c.	7,318
Roman Catholic Priests .....	2,497		
Armenian do. ....	474	Do. ....	343
Lutheran do. ....	1,003	Do. ....	955
Reformed Church .....	51	Do. ....	37
Mahometan Mollahs .....	7,850	Do. ....	6,071
Lamas (Tartar) .....	150		
NOBLES.			
Hereditary .....	Males. 284,731		Females. 253,429
By virtue of service, &c., with their sons	78,922	Wives, &c.	74,273
Petty Officers who have left the army } and are employed in the civil ser- } vice, &c. ....	187,047	.....	237,443
Foreigners of all classes .....	22,114	.....	15,215
Military Colonies .....	950,698	.....	981,467
INHABITANTS OF TOWNS.			
Merchants .....	131,347	.....	120,714
Shopkeepers, artisans, &c. ....	1,339,434	.....	1,433,982
Citizens in the Eastern Provinces ...	7,535	.....	6,966
Greeks of Nishney, gunmakers of } Toula, &c. ....	10,882	.....	10,940
Citizens of Bessarabia .....	57,905	.....	56,176
INHABITANTS OF VILLAGES.			
Peasants (that is, Slaves) the private } property of the Emperor and of } the Imperial Family, Peasants an- } nexed to the Crown, &c. ....	10,441,399	.....	11,022,594
Peasants the property of Nobles ...	11,403,722	.....	11,958,873
WANDERING TRIBES.			
Calmucks, Circassians, and Maho- } metans of the Caucasus .....	245,715	.....	261,982
TERRITORY BEYOND THE CAUCASUS.			
Georgia, Armenia, Mingrelia, &c. ....	(Nearly.) 689,147	.....	(Nearly.) 689,150
Poland .....	2,077,311	.....	2,110,911
Finland .....	663,658	.....	708,484
Russian Colonies in America .....	30,761	.....	30,292
Total of Population .....	28,896,223	.....	30,237,343
Grand Total of both Sexes .....	59,133,566		

In this number, however, the private soldiers of the army and navy, with their wives and children, are not included, so that the sum total, in round numbers, may be estimated at *sixty-one millions*. In addition to which, must be reckoned the inhabitants of the mountains between the Black Sea and the Caspian, 1,445,000 souls. There are also wandering tribes of Circassians and others, whom it is impossible to number.

This statistical account of Russia is translated from an official table published in the newspapers.—Some of the classifications, especially those of the inhabitants of towns, do not appear very intelligible.

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ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON.  
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